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The *conjunto* piano in 1940s Cuba: An analysis of the emergence of a distinctive piano role and style

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Abstract

By the early 1940s, the piano was an established part of the Cuban *conjunto* in the performance of *son montuno*, one of the great 20th century Cuban dance musics. Its role, however, has been given little attention by scholars. This thesis documents the emergence of an idiomatic and highly influential piano style during the 1940s in the new context of the *conjunto*. It argues that the piano represents a challenge to accepted views of the continuation of African musical practices in Cuba. Popular and academic perceptions of the African heritage in Cuba are directly related to the country's historical position as a former plantation slave society, in which African cultural forms were seen to survive within specific parameters, and in which the recreation of African musical instruments was a key feature. This has resulted in an over-simplification and binary categorisation of European and African musical elements. The perception of the piano as European has precluded it from the study of the broader application of African musical principles in the Americas, and discussions of African influence in Cuban piano style concentrate on the instrument's percussive qualities rather than a change in function.

The *conjunto* piano style contests this paradigm, and the transformation that it embodies is more complex than a rhythmic or percussive touch. Although drawing on the role of the piano in other types of ensemble, *conjunto* pianists also recreated the musical function of the *tres*, a Cuban variant of the guitar, which had been the predecessor of the piano in the playing of *son montuno*. It is this that links the *conjunto* piano style with a wider musical world. Although elements such as call and response and the prominence given to improvisation have been seen in the literature as part of *son montuno's* African legacy, only Sublette (2004) has made the connection between African musical structures and the piano *montuno*, the repeated rhythmic ostinato which underscores instrumental and vocal improvisation.

My approach draws on both detailed musical analysis and the wider study of African music. Working from commercial recordings from the period, I argue that the construction and function of this ostinato can be linked to wider African musical principles. The practice of interlocking - the creation of harmony by means of a continuing stream of interlocked notes rather than block chords, and using motion to establish a harmonic centre - is characteristic of many African musical forms and is a key part of the piano *montuno*. Illustrated with extensive transcriptions from 1940s recording and present day performance, this analysis of the multiple functions of the *conjunto* piano provides insights into deeper principles of musical organisation that are at the heart of Cuban musical identity.

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Preface

'In our Cuba, it was said that a house without a piano was not complete; this instrument was cultivated here possibly more than in any other country in the Americas'. [1] **René Touzet**

The preceding statement, from René Touzet - a Cuban bandleader, arranger, composer and pianist who achieved notable success in Cuba, Mexico and the United States from the 1930s onwards - highlights the importance of the piano in Cuba and reveals the extent to which the instrument was, from early on in the 20th century, a prominent part of Cuban cultural life. Its importance has been hinted at by other writers (eg Sublette 2004, García 2006) but not studied in depth; the most comprehensive examination (Mauleón 1999) covers such a wide range of periods and genres that a detailed analysis of specific developments is impossible.

This thesis provides a new perspective on the role of the piano in Cuba, by focusing on a seminal point in twentieth century Cuban popular music: the emergence of a type of ensemble that became known as the *conjunto,* and the development of what I argue to be the most influential piano style in Latin American popular music, the *conjunto* piano. The *conjunto* (which literally translates as group or ensemble) was one of the most popular orchestral formats in pre-Revolutionary Cuba and best known for the performance of *son montuno*, one of the great twentieth century Cuban dance musics and the basis for subsequent dance styles on the island and internationally. The new function and unique style of the piano in the *conjunto* was one of its key features, and the resultant '*montuno*' style was, and remains, a signifier of this new approach. This thesis documents and analyses this period, from which it becomes clear that exposure to the *conjunto* piano style was crucial in the development of piano styles in other Cuban genres such as *danzón*, Cuban jazz, mambo and more recently *timba*, and beyond Cuba itself in Latin jazz and salsa.

In fully reconstructing the story and development of the *conjunto* piano, I put the transcription and analysis of the original recordings from 1940-1951 at the heart of the investigation, in order to reveal the musical structures and practices that emerged during this crucial period of its development. This is the first time that extensive musical transcription of key elements of the *conjunto* piano style have been presented in this way, enabling a much deeper analysis of its internal structure, rapid development and ongoing influence.

I argue that while Cuban music is often described using the language of binary opposites, with discussion of 'African' and 'European' instruments and elements, an analysis of the *conjunto* piano suggests a more complex layering. In particular I argue that the internal structure of the piano *montuno*, the repeated ostinato and main engine behind most popular Cuban dance music, can be analysed with reference to the musical principle of interlocking, a major form of musical organisation in Africa (see Stone 2005). Sublette is the only scholar to have made this connection, noting that the *conjunto* piano 'reinforced what originally, back in the Congo, had been a part for thumb piano' (Sublette 2004: 480-481). In other words, the *conjunto* piano echoes the cyclical interlocking ostinatos

[1] En nuestro Cuba, de la que se decía que la casa donde faltaba el piano no estaba completa, se cultivó ese instrumento posiblemente más que en ningún otro país de las Americas' (Touzet 1989: 5).

of Central African lamellophones; Sublette, however, does not link the piano *montuno* to the wider phenomenon of interlocking in Africa.

My analysis shows that while *conjunto* pianists were strongly influenced by other contemporary ensembles, it was from imitation of the cyclical ostinato (the *montuno*) played on the *tres* (a Cuban plucked string instrument, similar in design to the guitar but tuned in three sets of double strings) in earlier forms of *son montuno*, that this new approach to playing emerged, an approach that was radically different from piano styles in both classical and popular music until this point.[2] I also argue that the plucked *tres* style of playing can itself be traced both to West African chordophone accompaniment styles, and to the wider practice of interlocking. Thus the piano *montuno*, the recreation of the *tres montuno* by *conjunto* pianists, can be linked to a wider musical world and, as such, presents a challenge to accepted ideas about the continuation of European and African musical practice in Cuba.

I use the term "horizontal harmony", to describe the process of interlocking within the piano *montuno*. Arpeggiation is used to avoid chordal harmony and a harmonic sequence is implied by a stream of individual notes, rhythmically integrated into the shared structure of the *tumbao* (rhythm section). It is this process which makes the *conjunto* piano style unique and its internal structure represents both continuity and innovation. Pianists continued to use models derived from *tres* playing techniques and pitch arrangements as the basis for accompaniment patterns, while at the same time transforming them in ways more idiomatic to the piano. (A similar type of relationship can be seen in the adaptation of traditional instruments onto the guitar in 20th century African popular musics; see Schmidt 1994)

Three types of ensemble dominated Cuban popular dance music in the 1940s - the *charanga* orchestra (playing *danzón*); the Cuban jazz band (effectively cabaret show bands, performing various genres); and the *conjunto*. Although Cuba was a socially divided society and each type of ensemble had a distinct audience, instrumentalists moved freely between all three types of group, and mutual influence was inevitable.[3] Both *charangas* and jazz bands had already incorporated the piano before the emergence of the *conjunto,* and *conjunto* pianists were able to borrow freely from both styles. From Cuban (and to a lesser extent North American) jazz bands, *conjunto* pianists took the idea of having an extended, virtuoso piano solo as an integral part of a song. *Charanga* orchestras, during the 1940s, were being transformed by rhythmic and stylistic innovations (in part inspired by *son montuno*) which demanded more consistency in the piano part, and this was echoed in *conjunto* pianists' gradual move towards a more consistently repeated ostinato.[4]

My approach to the subject inevitably overlaps with other scholars who have covered this fertile period in Cuban musical history but, given my primary focus on the piano and the transcription and analysis of the *conjunto* style, does not duplicate their work. The study of global popular music has rarely included musical transcription and analysis, with scholars tending to concentrate on contexts and issues, such as audiences and their relationships with performers, at the expense of the music itself.

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[2] See glossary for a more detailed description of the *tres*.
[3] For more detail, see García (2003) 66-82.
[4] The most comprehensive study of Cuban jazz during this period is Acosta (2003); for more detail on the *charanga* orchestra see Sublette (2004) 344-346, 448-453.

Within the study of Cuban music Mauleón (1999), Leymarie (2002) and Manuel (1998) contain some transcription. My work is closer to García (2003, 2006) and Davies (2003), who concentrate on the *conjunto* period and use musical transcription and analysis of commercial recordings as part of their studies of individual musicians (the *tresero* and bandleader Arsenio Rodríguez and the trumpeters Felix Chappottín and 'Chocolate' Armenteros respectively). Unlike these scholars, however, I examine the emergence of an exemplar *conjunto* piano style. While there have been key figures in the development of this style, such as Lino Frías (of Sonora Matancera) Pepé Delgado (Conjunto Niagara, Conjunto Colonial and Conjunto Casino) or Lilí Martínez (Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez) I am more concerned with shared characteristics of this style than with individual interpretations or idiosyncrasies.

There are also affinities in my approach with the study of jazz. Berliner (1994) and Monson (1996) use extensive transcription from commercial recordings to demonstrate how musicians create complex music from a basic score (represented by the lead sheet of melody and chord symbols), using a variety of improvisational techniques. Although *conjunto* recordings can only provide a snapshot of the performance of *son montuno*, and of how different pianists approached the variety of elements that comprised their role, analysis of representative structures can offer an insight into the ways in which the process evolved.

The work of Simha Arom (1991) in transcribing and analysing musical structures in the Central African Republic also provides a model for a purely musicological approach to the study of a shared oral tradition. Arom describes his work as being a series of concentric circles with musical material in the centre, and other elements - such as conceptual devices, instruments and social function - in the outer circles (1991: xxi). In this way he prioritises the purely musical over its context and uses recording techniques and transcription to capture the essence of a piece of music, while acknowledging the wide variety of possible variations. Although in the *conjunto* different players could use different piano *montunos* within the same song, there are parallels between my approach and that of Arom. Each *montuno* has an essential structure, around which are woven multiple variations, and like Arom I use transcription and analysis to demonstrate the way in which these variations occur.

The majority of the recordings I transcribe are from the period 1940-51, in which the *conjunto* was established as one of the most popular types of dance music ensemble. The period begins with the first ever *conjunto* recording (and Arsenio Rodriguez's first recording with his own *conjunto*), *El Pirulero no Vuelve Mas* in 1940, and ends with Arsenio's final departure for the United States in 1951, and with the strong emergence of mambo (following the success of Pérez Prado's *Que Rico el Mambo,* released in 1950) as a new challenger to *son montuno.* While the *conjunto* as a format dates from the mid 1930s, there are no *conjunto* recordings from before 1940 for a number of reasons. Political instability on the island and the effects of the Depression resulted in a break in recording between 1930 and 1937 while the more established *charangas* and jazz bands dominated the immediate post-1937 recording sessions. And although there were some *conjuntos* already formed by 1940, a larger number came into existence (or expanded from the earlier sextet/septet format) and made their first recordings between 1940 and 1944. The greater number of recordings made between 1944 and 1951 coincides with the formation of yet more *conjuntos*, and, as I will show, reveal a further consolidation of musical style.

A note on terminology

Music terminology in Cuba and the wider world of salsa is notoriously fluid and many terms have multiple meanings within Cuba, or differ on the island from the wider world of Latin music. In this section I clarify the terminology I shall use and define some of the more problematic usages. I have also provided a glossary of the terms referred to in this thesis.

Son and *son montuno* are often used interchangeably in Cuba to describe the genre but there is little agreement on specific differences. For the purposes of this thesis, I shall use the term *son montuno,* as opposed to *son*, for the genre as a whole, both in order to distinguish it from what has been described as the wider Caribbean *son* complex (León 1974: 116) and to root it more firmly in the *conjunto* tradition of the 1940s. Although Moore (1997) uses *son* to describe the genre as played by sextets and septets in the 1920s and 30s, both Sublette (2004) and García (2003) prefer *son montuno* for the specific structural arrangements that were established during the 1940s by *conjuntos*, derived from the *son* of the sextets and septets but with a more formalised structure. As I focus on this period, *son montuno* would seem to be the best usage.

García also highlights a second, more specific usage for *son montuno*: to describe the *sonero* style of playing that came to be associated with Arsenio Rodríguez and his stylistic imitators, and to distinguish it from the *guarachero* style (García 2003: 231-236). *Guaracha*, a song style derived from 19th century *bufo* comic theatre, had with the addition of a *montuno* section, effectively become a sub-group of *son* and groups who played this repertoire, such as Conjunto Casino or Conjunto Kubavana, were known as *guaracheros*. For Chapter 6, in which I examine stylistic differences between *soneros* and *guaracheros*, I also use the term in this more specific meaning, that of a stylistic choice rather than a musical genre, with the understanding that the basic musical structure of *son montuno* remained in both approaches, in spite of stylistic differences.

The word *montuno* itself (literally 'from the mountains' referring to *son montuno*'s origins in the east of Cuba) refers to the second, open-ended section of *son montuno* (as it also does in *rumba*). The word is also used for the repeated ostinato played by pianist (or *tresero*) during this section. However, there are other ways of describing a piano *montuno*. In some North American literature the term *guajeo,* usually referring to wind or string ostinati, is used to describe the piano part (Gerard/Sheller 1989) and piano *tumbao* is often used in Cuba itself. To distinguish the piano part from that of the other instruments of the rhythm section, piano *montuno* seems the clearer, most specific usage, though it remains more current in the United States than in Cuba itself.

The *tumbao* is both the name for the rhythm section as a whole and for the shared ostinato played by the members of that rhythm section, but can also refer to the piano part alone, the bass part or the conga rhythm (Mauleón 1993: 61). Orovio defines the *tumbao* as a 'groove', adding that it can be both 'characteristic, aggregate rhythms pulses, emphases and syncopations' and 'the most fundamental rhythm of the instrument that the performer will repeat in endless variation' (Orovio 2004: 215) and I will be using the term to signify the shared rhythmic-harmonic structure of the rhythm section as a whole.

I use the terms salsa and salsa piano to distinguish the specific structures and techniques in

salsa, inherited in part from Cuban dance music, from the more general Latin music or Latin piano that could, for example, include Brazilian *samba* or Latin jazz. There is little agreement on the meaning of the word salsa itself. Trombonist Willie Colón has stated that 'I believe that salsa is not a rhythm or a genre that can be identified or classified; salsa is an idea, a concept, a way of assuming music from the Latin American cultural perspective' (quoted in Berrios Miranda 2003: 54). Thus, the term salsa does not describe a genre as such, rather a set of common principles. However, according to Mauleón, 'Cuba tends to be the focal point in terms of the vocabulary of styles which serve as the foundation for the music' (1999:109) and certainly with respect to the piano *montuno*, there is a direct line between the *conjunto* piano style which emerged in the 1940s and the function and internal structure of salsa piano.

Some non-musical terminology can also be problematic. The problems of making generalisations, particularly musical ones, about a continent the size of Africa, with its wealth of ethnic groups, language families and cultural traditions, have been noted by many scholars (Waterman 1991: 170). Agawu avoids a direct definition, instead outlining a comprehensive list of African repertoires- traditional, popular and within art music- and asserts that 'African music is best understood as not only encompassing these genres and repertoires, but also indicating a richest of artistic possibilities for artistic expression in musical language' (Agawu 2003: xv). Kubik simply states that 'for most researchers the term "African music" refers to musical practices of the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa' and, drawing on Lomax (1968) outlines a core area within West and Central Africa that contains the largest percentage of shared musical traits (Kubik 1994: 1,13). In this thesis, I use the term African, with regard to musical principles, in its widest sense, to refer to an approach to musical creation and the application of procedures shared by sub-Saharan African societies. As Nketia notes, African musical cultures 'form a network of distinct yet related traditions which overlap in certain aspects of style, practice or usage, and share common features of internal pattern, basic procedure and contextual similarities. These related musical traditions constitute a family distinct from those of the West or the Orient in their areas of emphasis' (Nketia 1974: 4).

The use of transcription and analysis

The study of popular music has suffered from two related problems. An emphasis on the examination of social factors surrounding its creation and dissemination and the study of its cultural impact has led to the general acceptance of studies with little or no musical analysis. Related to this has been the journalistic tendency of listing and evaluating individual musicians and their contribution to a genre, again without analysis, in musical terms, of the musical foundation of this contribution. In both cases, there is not enough written about the music itself, how it is constructed and performed, and what factors contribute to its musical development. In this study I challenge this bias and concentrate on specifically musical features, using transcription and analysis to illustrate the development of a new and radically different approach to piano playing in popular music.

My introduction to Cuban music came from studying Latin American percussion, having completed a degree in music and an MA in Latin American Studies. Given the rhythmically intricate nature of Cuban music and the complex interlocking between the constituent parts of an ensemble, this familiarity with the basic rhythmic structures has proved to be invaluable. As a professional pianist

and arranger, I appreciate the unique and distinctive role of the piano in Cuban popular music, which is clearly very different from its role in the Western classical tradition. For this reason, I have chosen to use my skills in playing and transcription to highlight the technical construction of the piano *montuno* and, more widely, the performance style of the *conjunto* piano. I use transcription and analysis to get to the heart of the role of the *conjunto* piano within a period of Cuban musical history that has frequently been reduced to lists of musicians and ensembles. While not ignoring extra-musical factors, I concentrate on the music itself as a commercial art form in which musicians simultaneously reflected and circumvented the social contradictions of the period. The now-easy availability of *conjunto* recordings, with the recent re-issue on CD of many 78s from the period means that a historical study of this kind is more feasible. (See the introduction for a more detailed discussion of my use of transcription).

Musical transcription cannot provide more than a glimpse or taste of the huge repertoire of Cuban popular music from this period and the role of the piano within it. I have therefore transcribed only what is relevant for the points I'm making and, in many cases, this means not all the instruments, especially percussion, are included. I have transcribed the *tres* at pitch, following Lapidus (2005); however, when citing the transcriptions of García (2003) I have continued his practice of transcribing the instrument an octave higher. Trumpet parts are in C for ease of examination and comparison. Rhythms, such as the *tresillo*, which are transcribed in 2/4 in the section on 19th Cuban piano music, are re-written in 4/4 for 20th century popular music as this had become the common way of transcribing them.

I have referenced CD and 78 recordings in the text, except when repeated. The exception to this is transcribed examples which are listed separately. In addition I have put together three CD compilations of the commercially recorded songs from which the transcriptions are taken (though the quality of these recordings varies, as many are transferred from cassette tape or directly from 78 records). I have provided discography of both the 78 recordings accessed at the Díaz Ayala Collection at Florida International University and of the many CD collections and compilations I have used. Taped interviews, both my own and those accessed at the Díaz Ayala Collection, are listed separately; all other interviews are included in the bibliography. All photographs are taken (with permission) from the website of the Díaz Ayala Collection, with the exception of the *claves* (dkimages.com); the *marímbula* (shangtu.com); and the *botija* (montunocubano.com).

Chapters are organised in a broadly chronological order, although there is considerable overlap. The musical context in which the *conjunto* piano emerged is crucial to its development. The first part of the thesis, therefore, collates information from a wide range of sources, including recordings, interviews and existing literature on *son montuno,* in order to trace the development of key elements of the *conjunto* piano style. I provide a detailed background to instrumental roles in *son montuno*, and in particular that of the *tres,* and present an overview of the development of *son montuno* as the most important Cuban genre of the twentieth century.

Chapter 1 outlines the main musical principles behind *son montuno*, particularly as they pertain to the piano *montuno*, highlighting their wider usage in pan-American salsa. I also examine the theoretical and conceptual background to the continuation of African musical principles of musical

organisation in the Americas, and relate this to the internal structure of the *tumbao*, or rhythm section, of *son montuno*. In Chapter 2, I examine the legacy of the *tres* in the *son montuno* ensemble, contest the assumption of its European origins, and find parallels between early forms of *son montuno*, such as *changüi*, and some West African song forms, which feature a similarly constructed plucked string accompaniment. I then trace developments in *son montuno* during the 1920s, such as changes in instrumentation and the increasing influence of the *clave* rhythm, which transformed the rhythmic outline of the *tres montuno*. Chapter 3 examines the piano repertoire of Cuban classical music in the 19th and early 20th centuries, which was heavily influenced by popular genres, but I argue that this type of musical crossover never seriously challenged the piano style inherited from European classical music. I also examine an isolated early example (1928) of the piano in a *son montuno* sextet, the Sexteto Gloria Cubana.

The second part of the thesis contains the bulk of my original research. A discussion of the way the piano was used in other contemporaneous genres of popular music is followed by an analysis of the *conjunto* piano and its development in the period 1940-51. Chapter 4 chronicles the mutual influence between the *conjunto* and contemporary popular ensembles - the *charanga* orchestra and jazz band - during the late 1930s and 1940s, while Chapter 5 concentrates on the emergence of the *conjunto* itself and early examples of *conjunto* piano style. Chapter 6 examines the division in style between *sonero* and *guarachero conjuntos,* which became more marked in the second half of the 1940s, and what effect this had on the piano *montuno*, given the tendency of pianists to move freely between different types of ensemble.

The popular music of Cuba is fascinating not just for its own unique qualities but for its worldwide impact as the original source of so much subsequent Latin popular music. The period 1940-51 provides a key part of that original source material, and that importance alone would justify a deeper analysis of its musical structures. This is the first time that the emergence and development of the *conjunto* piano has been studied in depth, and my research confirms its centrality to the history of both Cuban music and, more widely, Latin American culture.

Introduction

This introductory chapter outlines the scope of my topic and my approach to it. I argue that the piano has until now been examined purely from a European standpoint in Cuban popular music and has been absent from discussions on the continuation of African musical practices on the island. My research, however, establishes the use of African musical structures and processes within the *conjunto* piano style and challenges this bias. The emergence of the *conjunto* style in the 1940s, with its fusion of continuity and innovation, underlines the importance of this fertile decade as a crucible for many subsequent musical developments,

I begin with a brief background to *son montuno*, the *conjunto* and the *conjunto* piano, to provide context for my arguments and approach. This is followed by a critique of the prevailing cultural paradigm in Cuba that assigns musical elements to either African or European origin, without a deeper analysis of their function. I then provide an overview of the literature on Cuban music, situating my own research within it and addressing gaps and issues. Finally, I present an overview of my methodology for the subject, in particular the use of transcription and analysis of commercially released recordings from the period in question, and discuss the challenges and problems I encountered in its execution.

1. *Son montuno* and the emergence of the *conjunto* piano

In order to understand the significance of the *conjunto* piano, it is necessary to situate it within the development of *son montuno* as a genre. *Son montuno* is generally acknowledged as the most influential twentieth century popular genre in Cuba, with Sublette referring to it as the 'mother form for Cuban music in the twentieth century' and Manuel declaring that it was to 'dominate musical culture not only in Cuba but in most of the Spanish speaking Caribbean' (Sublette 2004: 333; Manuel 1995: 36). As Moore has noted, it can be a difficult genre to define, given the many sub-divisions and hybrid forms within Cuba itself and more widely in Latin America. Using the pre-1940 sextet/septet 'classic' period as a basis for his definition, he describes it as a sung genre in duple metre with simple diatonic harmonic progressions; it has a verse (*largo* or *canto*) section, which can either involve repeated verses or a verse/chorus structure; following the *largo* is the *montuno* section which is faster, cyclical and based around call and response between a soloist and the chorus (*coro*) (Moore 1997: 89-90).

During the 1920s and early 30s, the period of *son montuno's* first commercial success, the genre was performed by sextets. These comprised vocals, *tres*, guitar, bass, *bongo,* maracas and *claves* (the two wooden sticks on which the *clave* rhythm is played); with the addition of a trumpet (from 1927 onwards) many became septets (Moore 1997: 91). By the end of the 1930s, the majority of groups (though not all) stopped using the guitar and/or the *tres*, in favour of the piano, and the addition of further trumpet(s) and a *tumbadora* (conga drum) paved the way for the formation of the *conjunto*. The main structural development in the post-1940 *conjunto* period was the inclusion of an extended instrumental solo (usually the piano but also the *tres*) towards the end of the *montuno* section.

The role of the *conjunto* piano has been, since its introduction, multi-faceted and constantly varied. Although in the majority of cases the piano was incorporated into the *conjunto* as a replacement for both the *tres* and the guitar, this was not always the case. Arsenio Rodríguez, for example retained

both instruments, and pianists, who frequently moved between ensembles, had to be able to adapt to each format. The sectional structure of *son montuno* meant that pianists also had to provide appropriate accompaniment styles as a song progressed. In the *largo* section, pianists would often ornament the melody line, adding flourishes in between phrases, or play a chordal accompaniment such as a vamp, a style that was also used in the accompaniment of boleros; in the *montuno* section they would provide a more consistent ostinato, known as the piano *montuno*, and this would be interrupted only for a musical break or for the piano solo.

The success of *son montuno* as a musical genre, both in Cuba and around the world, represents the acceptance of an open-ended, improvisational way of musical construction, previously confined to Afro-Cuban street genres, such as *rumba* or *conga de comparsa*. The term Afro-Cuban is an inexact one and can be problematic. As Philip Tagg has pointed out with regard to Afro-American, this type of hyphenated usage can imply that Afro-Cuban culture is somehow separate from, or not a part of the wider Cuban culture (Tagg 1989: 291). Moore prefers to use 'African-influenced', to refer to 'modalities unique to Cuba that are heavily influenced by African aesthetics but also by the expression of Spain and other sources (Moore 1997: 11). Afro-Cuban is, however, widely used in both the scholarly literature and by Cubans themselves to define (whole or partial) African descent or origin in race or culture, and I use it in this broad sense, while recognising its limitations.

By street genres I am referring to the secular dance and carnival music, generally performed in the open air, such as *rumba* and *comparsa,* which developed in urban areas with the end of slavery in late 19th century. Although performed by Cubans of all backgrounds, these genres are still considered Afro-Cuban; Daniel, in her study of *rumba* notes: 'Despite the glorification of an African and European heritage or "working-class" values within *rumba*, it continues to be a dance primarily of black or dark-skinned Cubans, with relatively little participation by mainstream Cuban society' (Daniel 1995: 16-17).

This open-ended form of musical construction found in Afro-Cuban street genres was, in *son montuno*, most clearly present in the inclusion of a *montuno* section: the extended musical segment constructed from a cyclical shared musical ostinato over which vocal and instrumental improvisation takes place. The concept of a *montuno* section was increasingly exported to other musical genres such as *danzón* and Cuban jazz, as a way of both enabling vocal and instrumental improvisation and lengthening songs for dance. *Son montuno* was, however, the first musical genre to gain national acceptance with the *montuno* section as a basic structural element (Moore 197: 89).

The inclusion of the piano within the open-ended structure of *son montuno* also represented a blurring of social boundaries. The instrument had long been a preserve of the middle classes, conferring social and economic status, and its presence in popular music was confined to the more genteel *danzón* and cosmopolitan jazz bands. As Isolina Carillo - a singer and pianist with the 1940s all-female group Los Trovadores del Cayo and composer of *Dos Gardenias*, one of the most famous Cuban boleros - comments about earlier decades:

> 'In those days there was a piano in most houses. Where there wasn't one, or one that wasn't played, the house seemed empty, gloomy. In the morning you would go through the neighbourhood and hear, step by step, people practising. For the rich it was a status symbol,

another part of their children's education, though they didn't like it and played it badly'. [5]

As well as necessitating a different set of skills on the part of pianists, this democratisation of the piano gave the instrument a different profile within popular music. The emergence of the *conjunto* piano style thus also represents the moment when the instrument moved beyond the salon and middle class dance venues into a genre of working class origin.

An overview of the *conjunto* piano style

There are three elements of the *conjunto* piano - i) the informal accompaniment of the *largo* section, ii) the varied rhythmic repetition of the piano *montuno* and iii) the freely improvised piano solo. Of these three, only the piano *montuno* was unique to the *conjunto* during the period covered by this thesis, with the other elements found in both the *charanga* orchestra and the Cuban jazz band. However, there was considerable overlap between elements, with echoes of the *montuno* style appearing in both *largo* and solo sections. For this reason, although I will be concentrating on the piano *montuno* as the clearest new development in role of the piano in Cuban popular music, it is important to consider the *conjunto* piano as a whole and examine all of its constituent elements as part of a new approach to musical organisation.

The piano *montuno* is the most distinctive aspect of the multiple techniques that make up the *conjunto* piano. It consists of repeated, rhythmic ostinato played by pianists during the *montuno* section and based on the *tres montuno* of earlier ensembles. Found only in an ensemble context, it has been a musical feature from 1940s *conjuntos* to present day salsa and *timba* bands. The hands are rhythmically identical and move in parallel. They are usually an octave apart but the right hand frequently doubles some notes in a further octave doubling; both hands make use of sporadic chords and, in some cases, right and left hands are in 10^{ths} rather than octaves. The ostinato is harmonically simple, often based on tonic/dominant alternation and forms the accompaniment, along with other instruments of the rhythm section (known in *son montuno* as the *tumbao*) for vocal or instrumental improvisation.

My analysis shows that the piano *montuno* represents a departure from previous Cuban popular piano technique in two ways. Firstly, in its relationship with other *conjunto* instruments, the emphasis is on shared responsibility for all elements of the music, most notably the rhythmic element. Pianists interlock rhythmically with the rest of the *tumbao,* and momentum is created through this shared rhythmic ostinato. Secondly, within the piano *montuno* itself, musical elements are distributed differently from the way the instrument is played in other genres, with a move away from left hand harmony and right hand melody to a more democratic and rhythmically identical sharing of elements. There is an avoidance of block chords, replaced by frequent arpeggiation; melody (or counter melody) is incorporated within this and highlighted by means of accentuation and octave doubling. Both of

[5] 'En ese tiempo en la mayoria de las casas habían un piano. Donde no lo hubiera o no lo tocaron era una casa vacía, mustia. En la mañana recorrias el en barrio y escuchabas, paso a paso, las practicas. Para los ricos era un adorno, una asignatura más en la formación de sus hijos, aunque no les gustara y lo tocaron mal' Isolina Carillo (quoted in Martínez 1988: 50).

these features give pianists a strong rhythmic responsibility and a percussive clarity which is underlined by the absence of the sustain pedal in the *conjunto* piano style.

In spite of the rhythmic discipline involved in playing the piano *montuno*, it is important to remember that these repeated ostinati were, and are, rarely written down and can vary considerably within the length of a song. From the first entry of the piano into the *conjunto*, pianists were joining the rhythm section, with its semi-improvised structure, and even pianists in contemporary *timba* groups work from chord charts rather than written *montunos* (Perna 2005: 110). Likewise there is often more than one *montuno* for different sections of a song and the same *montuno* can be used for more than one song. It is not in the sequence of notes that pianists have to be skilled, but in the shared interlocking rhythms of the ensemble and in providing a level of consistency within this structure.

In this there are parallels with jazz piano, but there is a clear difference in approach between playing jazz piano and playing a piano *montuno*. In a typical piano *montuno* the hands are parallel and rhythmically identical, interlocking with other members of the ensemble as a single rhythmic unit. In Berliner's outline of the development of jazz piano, from early 20th century stride pianists to swing and bebop, the distinct roles of each hand are described separately with only one example of parallel movement (the playing of single note melodies in both hands simultaneously by virtuoso players such as Phineous Newborn in the bebop period) and this is seen as one approach within many rather than a basic feature (Berliner 1994: 132-133).

The harmonic progression of the *tumbao*, the shared ostinato provided by the rhythm section, can also form the basis for the piano solo, a freely improvised and virtuoso solo section in which the piano is supported by bass and percussion only, and this has helped to shape the development of a distinctive *conjunto* soloing style. Unlike the more complex harmonic sequences of jazz, which soloists have to follow closely, the basic harmonic structure in the *montuno* section is simple. A style of soloing has developed in both Cuba and the wider world of salsa, in which pianists can move out of this harmonic structure and disorientate the listener both rhythmically and harmonically, while using the return to the piano *montuno* as a means of signalling the end of the solo. As Manuel notes, certain key elements such as constant octave doubling or an alternative subdivision of beats, which are likewise found within the piano *montuno* itself, have become an accepted part of this style of soloing (Manuel 1998: 139-142).

2. Review of the Literature

One of my main arguments in this thesis is that the *conjunto* piano contests the stereotyped and commonly held view of Cuban music as falling into a binary division of cultural elements. This paradigm assigns African or European origins both to musical genres, based on clearly discernable elements such as instrumentation or formal characteristics, and to individual musical instruments, without a deeper examination of function or the persistence of modes of performance. It has been particularly strong in Cuba due to factors such as social history, the strength of Afro-Cuban cultural traditions and the prominence and influence of the ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortiz and his disciples.

Much literature on Cuban music, particularly that on *son montuno*, conforms to this paradigm (see Manuel 1995) but my analysis of the *conjunto* piano, and above all the piano *montuno*, suggests a

much richer and complex reading than previously implied. In order to fully understand why the piano has been neglected or omitted from debates on the African presence in Cuba, it is important to examine this binary paradigm of cultural origins that has prevailed in Cuban thought.

In this section I examine the work of Fernando Ortiz and his contribution to this cultural paradigm. His influence is felt in much contemporary literature and discourses on Cuban music and has been crucial in shaping debates within Cuban musicology. I introduce the reasons behind the binary division and contest the notion that African elements are to be found solely within the boundaries of what are considered specifically Afro-Cuban cultural forms and practices. In particular, I argue that descriptions of musical instruments and their function within an ensemble are especially susceptible to this type of over-simplification. This perpetuates the perceived division between 'African rhythm' and 'European melody', while deeper musical structures and approaches are missed.

A Critique of Fernando Ortiz and the binary cultural paradigm in Cuba

The African presence in Cuban society and culture has been the subject of great interest and study by scholars, both in Cuba and abroad, from the earliest days of the colony.[6] However, this interest has been characterised by two related and problematic tendencies: the division of Cuban culture into the binary opposites of African and European, and the assigning of individual cultural elements to one or the other origin. This has been particularly true of music, and because of its European origins, the piano has been excluded from any discussion of African musical influence in Cuba.

As Béhague has noted, Afro-Latin ethnomusicology has, until recently, been dominated by diffusionist theories, which trace surviving 'Africanisms' in contemporary Latin American culture to their origin in Africa (1994:vi-vii). He criticises this approach as simplistic and warns against the facile identification of African elements: 'Although certain associations of musical instruments and their playing techniques and certain features of style may carry significant markers of identification as historical referents, they are not the only means that define the essence of the relationship of music to black ethnicity' (1994: vii). In other words, one should not rely solely on the most obvious examples of African musical practice, or the presence of specific musical instruments, to build a picture of continuing African cultural presence. This approach perpetuates a false division between African and European (or indigenous) 'elements', and reduces them to easily identifiable features such as musical instruments, rhythms or scales.

In much of the Caribbean, where indigenous culture has been considerably less prominent than in other parts of Latin America, a European/African paradigm has dominated academic and popular discourse. Due to the racial divides in the Latin Caribbean as a result of slavery, different musical styles and types of ensemble developed within distinct racial groups and for specific audiences. In Cuba these styles have ranged from those considered of European origin, such as *punto guajiro,* to those considered of African origin such as the religious music for *santería* ceremonies or the secular *rumba*. Even with genres that were popularly supposed to fuse the two in more equal measures, such as *danzón* and later *son montuno*, a division remained in popular perception between the melodic 'European' instruments and 'African' percussion. The strong presence of Afro-Cuban musicians

[6] See Carpentier 2001: 153-165.

performing in all genres did nothing to dilute this strict division of musical elements, particularly instruments, by their perceived provenance.

A key factor in the perpetuation of a binary paradigm has been the influence of Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969), a Cuban academic and anthropologist who almost single-handedly created a space in Cuban society for the study of Afro-Cuban music. In spite of an ambivalent attitude towards Afro-Cuban culture in his early writings, his interest gave the subject a profile and status not seen before and strongly influenced later researchers (eg Carpentier 1946, Linares 1979, Urfé 1977). As recently as 2005 his legacy has been re-examined and celebrated.[7] As Moore puts it 'The efforts of Ortiz over a period of more than five decades proved so central to the formation of formal Afrocuban studies and the directions of its investigations, that his recorded thoughts are now surrounded with a certain aura of inviolability' (Moore 1994: 32).

Although Ortiz's early works were strongly influenced by cultural evolutionism and he initially saw Afro-Cuban elements in Cuban culture as throwbacks to a primitive past, in his work during the 1930s he increasingly conceived of Cuba as a more equal mix of African and Hispanic cultural elements (Moore 1994: 36, 40-41). This period of his work culminated in the publication of *Cuban Counterpoint* (1940) in which the binary paradigm of sugar and tobacco was used as a metaphor for the contrasting and opposing forces which worked in counterpoint to create Cuban culture. Although Ortiz did not ignore the indigenous presence in Cuba in *Cuban Counterpoint*, much of the binary opposition within his work stems inevitably from the African/European presence on the island.

In his writing on music, his detailed classification of both genres and instruments stressed their origins as either European or African and prioritised description over a deeper analysis of playing technique or instrumental function. Although he did write about the presence of African string instruments in the New World, this is easily missed amongst the wealth of detail about Afro-Cuban drums and percussion in his five-volume *Los Instrumentos de la Música Afro-Cubana* (1952). Thus the idea of Afro-Cuban (and by extension African) music as being predominantly percussion-based was underlined and, conversely, the *tres*, a string instrument conceived in Cuba, was perceived to be of European origin.

In his introduction to the 1995 English edition of *Cuban Counterpoint*, Fernando Coronil maintains that Ortiz 'treats binary oppositions not as fixities, but as hybrid and productive, reflecting their transcultural formation and their transitional value in the flow of Cuban history' (Coronil 1995: xiv). In this sense he was a post-modern writer, dealing with hybrid identities and applying his theory of transculturation which suggested a greater equality and flexibility between European and African elements than the more common theory of acculturation. Nevertheless, for Ortiz, the Afro-Cuban cultural presence remained the 'other', and although his interest took the form of a lifelong study of Afro-Cuban culture, he indulged in what Agawu has termed 'differencing': the deliberate finding and stressing of cultural difference on the basis of race (Agawu 2003: 156-7).

Ortiz's exhaustive documentation and classification of African musical instruments began an emphasis in the research community on organology as the key to music's provenance and this has affected what are considered 'African' and 'European' elements in Cuban music (eg Manuel 1995; 36).

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[7] Font/Quiroz 2005.

For subsequent writers, both Cuban and non Cuban, the symbolic and visual potential of this binary paradigm and the contrast between Afro-Cuban rhythm (instruments) and Spanish melody (instruments) has been irresistible. From book titles (*Strings and Hide;* Fernandez 1996); to chapter or section headings (*Guajiros y Negros* in Evora 2003, *Tres* y *Bongó* in Sublette 2004); to the visual (the cover illustration for *Strings and Hide*, with its picture of a conga drum and a *tres*, or for Peter Manuel's *Caribbean Currents* 1995, which contrasts illustrations of black Cubans performing *rumba* with white, *tres* and guitar-playing *guajiros*), the binary paradigm has been stressed. It has proved a convenient way to introduce different aspects of Cuban music such as *Elementos Hispánicos* and *Elementos Africanos* in Linares (1974) or *African-derived Musics* and *European-derived Musics* in Manuel (1995).

Son montuno, by virtue of its perceived balance between African and European elements and its 'national music' status, has been particularly susceptible to this type of treatment, especially with regard to the 1920s sextet format. The 'European' instruments (*tres*, guitar and bass) are seen as having a melodic role and the 'African' instruments (maracas, *claves*, *bongó*) a rhythmic/percussive one. The *largo/montuno* structure is likewise seen as a progression from a closed, European verse section to an open-ended and improvised African *montuno* (Moore 1997: 90). The writer and musician Andrés Alén told me that the musicologist Argeliers León further deconstructed the *son montuno* structure to argue that the two sections represent Spanish and African linguistic traits: the Spanish use a large number of words to say very little (the *largo* section) while Africans can convey a great deal within a very concise phrase (the *montuno* section) (Alén Interview 12.7.02). This is not to deny the truth of any of these assertions, simply to show the extent to which *son montuno* is seen to fulfil many aspects of the paradigm.

The Cuban paradigm has been further underlined by the strong visual imagery of guitars and drums generally, and more specifically in the *tres* and *bongó*, seen as the twin symbols of *son montuno*. The salsa pianist Rebeca Mauleón argues that the strength of this 'guitar and drum' symbolism has contributed to the neglect of the piano in Cuban popular musical history (Interview 18.4.2003). I would take this further and argue that this symbolism is part of a much wider process of instrumental categorisation. Although elements such as call and response, rhythmic polyphony or the prominence given to improvisation have been seen in the literature as part of *son montuno*'s African legacy this has been in an ensemble context. The function or playing style of individual instruments is still assumed to be consistent with their perceived origin. The presence and function of the *conjunto* piano challenges this discourse and an investigation of its emergence and development provides a new perspective to the study of Cuban popular music.

Contesting the Paradigm

This type of musical compartmentalization is not confined to literature on Cuban music. Some jazz literature reveals a similar simplification with regard to a more abstract notion of European harmony and African rhythm.[8] Jackson points out that the study of jazz has suffered from an emphasis on the surface features of musical sound, at the expense of deeper structures: 'such an evaluative

[8] See Washburne 1997: 59-60.

framework, freighted as it is with assumptions about what "sounds African" and what "sounds European" fails to distinguish between the expressive medium of musical sound and the conceptual bases that inform its production' (Jackson 2000: 24). Likewise, in the study of Western popular music, Negus notes that: 'In particular, we should be wary of simple binary stereotypes that have been used to separate black and white musics, and European and African culture', and Tagg has deconstructed these terms, showing that so-called 'black' or 'white' traits can be found in both African and European musical forms (Negus 1996:105; Tagg 1989: 288-291).

This type of simplification is not found, however, in all writing on the African cultural presence in the Americas as a whole. Literature on African American culture, popular music and jazz provides a useful resource in taking the Cuban debate beyond African musical 'retentions' and towards the recognition of a deeper process at work within Cuban popular music. Scholars such as Samuel Floyd and Paul Gilroy have recognised that there are numerous other factors that contribute to the artistic process and that cultural forms rarely remain static over time and relocation. A broader interpretation of the African presence includes an awareness of more abstract concepts and principles, including approaches to musical organisation and creation. These can then be applied to a wider range of forms and practices, and to instruments such as the piano, which have previously been excluded from such an investigation.

It is no accident that much of this latter work has taken place in the study of jazz and African American music. In a situation where 'the African influence has become more indirect' (Brown 1992: 116), an emphasis on performance and style, rather than content or instrumentation, has been a feature of African American musical studies. In Cuba, on the other hand, there has been the strong historical presence of musical forms and structures of often relatively recent (19th century) African origin, both sacred and secular. In particular, the survival of Afro-Cuban musical styles can be partly attributed to the importance of *cabildos,* religious brotherhoods encouraged by the colonial government and instrumental in conserving African cultural traditions from religious rites to carnival (Urfé 1984:171, Brandon 1993:71).[9] As a result, the examination of African musical processes away from their original context has been an avenue largely unexplored by scholars.

Paul Gilroy's work on the hybrid nature of 'Black Atlantic' culture highlights the problems of cultural over-simplification. Arguing against racial essentialism, he asks 'How are we to think critically about artistic products and aesthetic codes which, though they may be traceable back to one distinct location, have been changed either by the passage of time or by their displacement, relocation or dissemination through networks of communication and cultural exchange?' (Gilroy 1993: 80). This is echoed by Ernest Brown who argues that African musical traditions are not static entities, closed to new development, but constantly changing processes, in which new styles can be reinterpretations of old ones. He points out that diffusionist models of African influence in the New World assume an unchanging, original source and ignore both ongoing change in Africa itself and the influence of a variety of Afro-American musics (Brown 1992: 117). Both scholars stress the need to look beyond the surface elements of musical retention to deeper structures and processes that can survive a radical change in context.

[9] For more information see Barnes 1989, Brandon 1993, Knight 1970, Urfé 1984

As Brown and Gilroy note, the strength of these musical structures and processes lies in their ability to withstand constant change, both within Africa itself and in the New World. Nettl, in his examination of musical change, notes: 'The various components of music must work together, and humans who make music try to find structures in which they are compatible. Having found such a way, people are not quick to accept change in the nature of the system, instead substituting constant internal change. And the better a musical system accommodates the need for the elements to interrelate, the more it will remain stable, and perhaps the more it will also permit and require changes *within* the system' (Nettl 1983: 183) Thus, within a strong musical system, already subject to a multitude of diverse influences, deeper structures and principles can remain stable underneath such transformations as a change in instrumentation or context.

Scholars have drawn attention to some of these deeper principles, highlighting elements such as style of performance and approaches to musical creation and transformation that underpin musical structures. Maultsby argues that an 'identifiable conceptual framework links these (African American) traditions to each other and to African musical traditions', and, drawing on Burnim (1985) cites style of delivery, sound quality and mechanisms of delivery as the cornerstones of this aesthetic framework (2005: 328). Monson suggests that jazz can be seen as the re-invention of the 'deeply participatory, interactive, heterogeneous and socially constitutive musical processes of West Africa in a vastly different context and with very different musical content' (Monson 1996; 195).

Floyd sees African American musical forms as part of a transformational process where pre-existing musical material is re-interpreted or revised in a way that renders the performance more important than the content. Using the term 'cultural memory' to describe this process, he argues that the greater or lesser existence of clearly African material is irrelevant as the process itself has become an established part of African American musical tradition. Musical signification, 'the transformation of pre-existing musical material by trifling with it, teasing it or censuring it' continues to the present in cover-versions, different mixes and sampling, whatever the provenance of the original musical material (Floyd 1995; 8). Perna, with regard to Cuban *timba*, likewise underlines the importance of process over specific elements: 'Rather than the retention of African elements, the logic at work in *timba* seems to be that of a *practice*, a process of permanent re-appropriation and re-articulation' (Perna 2005: 9).

For these scholars, the origin of specific traits in musical material is irrelevant, as it is in the approach to performance that the African presence can be found. Floyd, Brown and Monson all stress the transformational nature of African American cultural forms, in which the application of common procedures, rather than specific instruments, rhythms or formal characteristics is key to the continuation of the African American presence.

I share their desire to move beyond surface manifestations of 'Africanness' in the Americas and look at deeper structural processes and practices. Floyd's emphasis on repetition, recreation and ritual, in particular, as key features of a wider African American approach to music can be usefully applied to the piano *montuno* - not a fixed ostinato, but an approach to playing and to musical construction that involves repetition, variation and constant movement. Monson's argument that the African presence lies in the shared structures and participation of jazz musicians can likewise be applied in a Cuban context, in the shared polyrhythmic interaction of the *tumbao*. Using interviews and extensive musical

transcription, Monson and Berliner (1994) outline the musical relationships within jazz ensembles and provide valuable insights into how, within this 'essentially oral tradition', music is structured in both solo, melodic improvisation and supporting rhythm section (Berliner 1994: 507-508).

Closely related to this examination of shared musical participation is the analysis of deeper rhythmic structures as a key element in the continuance of African musical processes. This provides a more specific musical angle to these more abstract notions of approaches to performance and transformation. In the Cuban context, the *conjunto* pianist's role in the *tumbao* involves participating in a specific shared rhythmic structure (examined in detail in Chapter 1). This rhythmic structure forms the scaffolding around which individual musicians can vary their part, though without sacrificing their rhythmic responsibility. Thus a piano *montuno* can have many variations and still maintain its rhythmic role within the ensemble. The strength of the *tumbao*'s shared participation lies within the flexibility of this structure.

Wa Mukuna stresses rhythmic organisation as a key part of the process of African musical adaptation in the Americas, making an analogy between language and music. Discussing the linguistic adaptation of African slaves in the New World, he notes that while most African vocabulary was lost, the grammatical structures remained. He argues that since melody and harmony are more dependent on language, particularly with the wide use of tonal languages in Africa, it is these musical elements that have been most affected, while 'the concept of rhythmic organisation...has remained morphologically and syntactically African' (1997: 247). While Agawu has questioned the assumption that melodic shape is totally dependent on the speech tones of African tonal languages (Agawu 2003: 110-112), the shared rhythmic ostinato of the *conjunto tumbao* and the polyrhythmic alternation between instruments does conform toWa Mukuna's theory. In joining its polyrhythmic shared structure, pianists were becoming part of a way of creating music, previously restricted to other instrumental groups, in which both fixed and flexible rhythmic ostinati were combined with constant transformation to create an open-ended yet formally constructed composition.

This does not, however, fully explain the radical transformation that took place in the role and function of the piano within the ensemble. Literature on deeper structural processes, such as writings by Floyd and Monson, and Wa Mukuna's more specific highlighting of rhythmic organisation as the key to the African presence in the Americas provide insights into deeper musical structures and approaches that can be found in the *tumbao,* but do not fully explain the internal structure of the piano *montuno*. For this reason, I now look more closely into the internal structure in order to demonstrate that the process of harmony creation within the *montuno* conforms to a different set of principles than that of the piano in popular music until this point.

Interlocking as a musical principle- a theory

I propose the theory that within the internal structure of the piano *montuno* itself, pianists began to apply a new approach to harmony creation that radically changed the way the instrument was played. Although this new approach was based on imitation of the *tres*, and therefore represented a level of continuity within the *son montuno* ensemble, it was also a radical transformation of instrumental style and function. Constant movement and the avoidance of block harmony were used in

the place of chords, implying a harmonic sequence from within the flow of notes, and highlighting melody with stress and rhythmic accentuation.

I argue that this way of creating an accompaniment is based on the principle of musical organisation known as interlocking. Unlike styles or modes of performance or transformational approaches, this principle can be examined on a purely musical level and unlike the shared (and also interlocking) rhythmic structure of the *tumbao*, it can be examined with specific reference to the internal construction of the piano *montuno*.

Interlocking is an approach to musical performance that foregrounds shared participatory movement and rhythm over block harmony, and the separation of sounds over their sounding together, what Nketia calls 'a principle of voice separation' (quoted in DjeDje 2002:125). Although it can be an approach to rhythm alone, the addition of fixed pitches in the repetition of an ostinato, alternated between fingers, hands, instruments or voices, creates a harmonic sense through a continuous, shared stream of notes rather than through block harmony. Although this principle is found globally, for example in the musical traditions of Indonesian gamelan and Andean pan pipes, its use is extensive and deep-rooted in sub-Saharan Africa. Kubik, for example, sees interlocking as an essential musical approach on the continent and cites the Malagasy *valiha* as evidence. This instrument is one of the paradoxes of African music in that it is very similar to the Mande *kora* in tuning (alternate pitches) and playing technique (interlocking between alternate hands) in spite the fact that they are from geographically opposite ends of the continent and there is no evidence of any direct contact between the two instruments.[10] The importance of interlocking as a musical principle in sub-Saharan African music, combined with the legacy of slavery in the New World, suggests a probable path for its continuance in the Caribbean.

My ideas on interlocking derive mainly from studies of African music from secondary sources and recordings outlined here. The wider principle of interlocking is examined by among others, Arom (1984, 1991) Cooke (1994, 1996) and Kubik (1994) Grey (1993) Nketia (1962) Berliner (1981) and Koetting (1984). As an overall approach rather than a specific technique, it can be applied in a variety of musical circumstances and within vastly different instrumental families, from Zimbabwe to Mali and from Senegal to Ethiopia. Amongst plucked chordophones, interlocking appears in a variety of ways. Mande *koni (ngoni)* lute players and Ethiopian *bägänna* (lyre) players interlock between the thumb and index finger, a technique that has been transferred to the guitar in West Africa (Charry 2000: 189; Kaye 2000: 77; Tse Kimberlin 1996: 6). Players of the Ugandan *ennanga* harp alternate hands between the eight strings in an equally spaced rhythm, while with the Mande *kora*, the interlocking is between as thumb and index finger as well as alternate hands. In both cases the alternate tuning of strings facilitates the creation of flowing scales (Cooke 1996:445; Charry 2000:15, 158; Knight 1984: 3-66). The Ugandan *endongo* lyre is played with the thumb of the right hand and two fingers of the left; when two players play together, however, the play in unison rather than interlocking with each other (Grey 1993: 138, Cooke 1996: 447).

Lamellophones can be played with two thumbs interlocking (the Angolan *mucupata,* the Ugandan *kadongo*), two thumbs and an index finger (the Zimbabwean *mbira dza vadzimu*) or two

[10] See Kubik 1994 (introduction), Stone 2005

thumbs and two fingers (the Mozambican *malimba*) (Kubik 1999: 28-31; Berliner 1981: 32-34, 55). The Mande *bala* (xylophone) is struck with alternating hands (Charry 2000: 15). In Uganda, between two and six players can alternate in duple or triple time with *amadinda* (12 key) and *akadinda* (22 key) xylophones (Kubik 1964: 142-144; Cooke 1996: 440). The *akadinda* repertoire is often reworked from harp music, showing the flexibility of the interlocking process to instrumental substitution (Cooke 196: 445).

The extension of interlocking to strict hocket can be seen as a continuum. Arom and Kubik describe the interlocking yodelling technique of the Central African pygmies as 'vocal polyphony' rather than hocket, though aurally the effect is similar (Arom 1967:490; Kubik 2000: 268). Ghanaian flute ensembles are made up of flutes capable of more than one note (but not more than four); their interlocking produces what could be described as a loose hocket (Nketia 1962: 44-46, Koetting 1984: 161-162). Likewise Akan trumpets have one or two notes and interlock to produce a hocket effect (Nketia 1962:49). Strict hocket is found in end-blown flute ensembles of Southern Africa and Eastern Africa and in Central African horn ensembles (Cooke 2002: 233; Arom 1984, 1991). It has also extended to the Americas in the performance of *rara* carnival music in Haiti where single-note *banbous* (hollowed out bamboo tubes) are combined in a rhythmic hocket (McAlister 2002: 46).

Wa Mukuna describes percussive interlocking rhythms thus: 'Each pattern contains holes that provide "receptacles" for other patterns' (1997: 242); while Anku notes 'While in most other forms of music we have become accustomed to the tune concept (melody, voice leading) as distinct from harmonic and other accompanying elements.... there appears to be no such clearly defined or comparable tune concept in drumming' (Anku 1997: 212). With reference to Kpelle music, Schmidt notes 'In a musical performance, it is preferable to combine several different parts to create the sound complex... the individual parts however, only have meaning in relation to the whole' (1984: 195). With the addition of pitch, shared rhythmic patterns become shared melodies and, depending on factors such as overlap and resonance, can give an impression of vertical harmony. 'In traditional society we have a principle of voice separation which results in harmony because voices are doing different things, but it is a principle of voice separation... different from the Western concept of harmony based on vertical chords' (Nketia quoted in Dje Dje 2002: 125). While this statement could easily be challenged - by citing, for example, European round singing, Bach fugues or the South African choral tradition - it echoes Wa Mukuna and Anku's identification of an equally shared and alternated musical responsibility as a basic principle of organisation.

Both melody and harmony can be created from the combination of interlocking pitches. The creation, in the listener's mind, of melodic patterns ('inherent patterns') from a fast and regular flow of individual notes, often shared by players, has been studied by, among others Kubik (1964) and Wegner (1993). Kubik defines these as 'melodic-rhythmic gestalt patterns which are not played by the performers but arise in our and in the performers imagination directly from the structure of African instrumental composition'; sustained repetition is essential for these patterns to emerge (Kubik 1964: 155).

The piano *montuno* and the principle of interlocking

In the Cuban piano *montuno,* with its parallel movement between the hands, the principle of harmony creation is the same; arpeggiation is used to separate sounds and avoid block chords, and this allows the listener to perceive both melody and harmony from the continuous flow, with melody highlighted by the use of octaves. The element of alternation is not present, but harmony is still created by a sequence of notes sounding separately, rather than in chord progressions, a process that I refer to in this thesis as 'horizontal harmony'. In contrast to both classical and jazz piano, this approach involves very little sustain pedal as this would obscure both the clarity of the individual notes and the rhythmic stresses that give the *montuno* its energy.

It is this horizontal harmony, integrated into the shared rhythmic structure of the *tumbao,* which makes the *conjunto* piano style unique. Beyond rhythmic structures, or wider aesthetic principles, the piano *montuno* represents an approach to harmony creation via motion and accentuation, in which the sharing and alternation of a stream of notes between musicians, hands or fingers has been recreated in another context as arpeggiation and sporadically accented movement. It was in adapting this interlocking style that *conjunto* pianists revolutionised the role of the piano within popular dance music in Cuba.

Sublette is the only scholar to have made a connection between interlocking styles of accompaniment and the *conjunto* piano, noting that the *conjunto* piano 'reinforced what originally, back in the Congo, had been a part for thumb piano' (Sublette 2004: 480-481). In other words, the piano echoes the cyclical interlocking ostinatos of Central African lamellophones. He does not, however, link the piano *montuno* to the wider phenomenon of interlocking in Africa.

I argue that, in imitating the plucked playing style of *treseros*, *conjunto* pianists transferred this horizontal harmony to an instrument more commonly played using block chords. The *tres* is therefore a key element in the development of this approach to harmony creation and in Chapter 2 I examine further parallels between West African vocal/chordophone traditions, with special reference to interlocking, and early forms of *son montuno*, such as *changüí*, which emerged in the isolated eastern part of the island. The academic study of the blues in the United States by Kubik (1999) Charters (1981) and Oliver (1970) can be useful in contrasting the musical development of eastern Cuba, which has many social parallels with the United States (such as the absence of a large-scale plantation economy and the comparative isolation of individual farms) with the rest of the island. These authors link American blues and its distinctive guitar and vocal technique with the tradition of the 'sung literary genre' accompanied by long necked lutes in the West Central Sudanic Belt (Kubik 1999: 9, 21).

Within the literature on African music, Charry (2000), Knight (1984) Kimberlin (1996) and Dje Dje (2000) provide detailed analysis of the West African chordophone tradition, while Kaye (2000) Schmidt (1994) Waterman (1997) and Charry (1994) show how this technique was transferred to a wider West African two-fingered plucked guitar tradition. This could be used to support my argument that there was a parallel transference from these instruments to the Cuban *tres*. I am not suggesting, however, that interlocking techniques can be traced to a specific African region, simply that these parallels suggest one possible example of instrumental substitution and contest the common description of the *tres* as an instrument of European origin.

Drawing on Nketia (1974), Brown differentiates between shared features of African and Afro-American culture that are a result of direct contact, and what he calls 'family resemblances', cultural parallels that result from the 'application of common procedures' to distinct situations (Brown 1992: 125-127). Thus, as I argue in Chapter 2, the *tres* need not be a recreation of a specific African chordophone in Cuba for there to be a similar interlocking approach the playing technique of the *tres montuno*. Likewise, these 'common procedures' have been applied to an instrument of European origin, the piano, creating a new approach to harmonic construction on the instrument.

Nketia uses the term 'functional substitute' to describe an instrument that is substituted or improvised in the absence of the original instrument, and which then become established as a regular participant withtin a genre (Nketia 1980: 14). This is supported by Arom who states that 'A missing drum for any ceremony will often be replaced by some everyday object with suitable percussive characteristics' and by the example of the *cajón* (wooden packing case) being used as a drum substitute in Cuban *rumba* (Arom 1991; 149, Daniel 1995: 80)

Moreover, Nketia argues that, in the Americas, the rhythmic structure has also been shifted from percussive instruments to those of European origin that do not have a history of being played in this way.

> 'Not only do the guitar and double bass, for example, belong to the rhythm section, but also sometimes short ostinato patterns are assigned to other melodic instruments which play supportive accompaniment for an instrument that plays extended melodic lines. This gives one the impression of a formal organisation closely akin to usages in African drum music' (Nketia 1980: 16).

Kofi Agawu (1987, 1995), Burns (2004) and Anku (1997) explore rhythmic structures in West African music. while Agawu (2003) questions established assumptions regarding these structures from a post-colonial viewpoint. Wa Mukuna (1994, 1997) outlines the transformations that took place within these structures in the New World. These works likewise are useful for the examination of how rhythmic structures were transferred to melodic instruments within the *tumbao* of the Cuban *conjunto*.

García has noted this process in the trumpet counterpoint of Arsenio Rodríguez's *diablo* section (the final section of his song arrangements) in which trumpets create not melodic phrases but 'percussive-based patterns', using attack and accent to contribute to the shared rhythmic structure (García 2003: 30). However, for pianists joining the *conjunto,* above all when specifically substituting for the *tres*, there was a double use of interlocking: pianists were not only becoming part of the shared rhythmic interlocking ostinato of the *tumbao*, but also using internal interlocking within the construction of the piano *montuno* itself, creating an ostinato based on horizontal rather than vertical harmony. Elements of the piano *montuno*, such as octave doubling, sporadic chords and a constant rhythmic anticipation, further clarify and highlight this internal interlocking, and the wide tonal range of the instrument and the ability to exploit different timbres in different sections of the keyboard enables the easy accentuation of individual notes or melodic phrases. Thus the functional substitution of the piano for the *tres* resulted in a new and innovative approach to playing the piano, one with a basis in both shared and internal interlocking procedures.

The wider literature on popular music in Cuba

A subject such as the role of the *conjunto* piano inevitably falls between different academic disciplines, such as popular music studies, ethnomusicology, musical analysis and Cuban history, all of which have their own limitations. Ingrid Monson sets this out well, in relation to jazz. She notes that many recent interdisciplinary studies focus on political and social issues at the expense of composition and performance, while post-structural cultural theory struggles to include music as a non-verbal language within its remit. Jazz musical theory can often seem to exist in isolation, without reference to history, aesthetics or cultural interpretation. At the same time there is a wealth of non-academic journalistic and biographical material that concentrates on personalities at the expense of the music itself (Monson 1996: 2-4).

Literature on Cuban music suffers from many of the same limitations as jazz and, in addition, specific characteristics due to the island's social and recent political history. As I outlined above, an African/European binary paradigm has dominated the study of Cuban music, resulting in a pre-occupation with musical origins at the expense of later developments. This has been exacerbated by the prioritising of specific cultural forms, such as Afro-Cuban folklore or classical ballet, by the Revolutionary government, leading to a hierarchy of scholarship in which hybrid popular forms are given less attention than those with a more easily identifiable cultural background (Moore 2006: 57, 64). It is only recently that the study of Cuban music has been expanded to include social context, and this has tended to remain a focus for non-Cuban writers. Meanwhile, literature on pan-American salsa, though often examining the *conjunto* as part of a general outline of Cuban musical history, concentrates on either practical playing techniques or the social analysis of non-Cuban contemporary styles.

Popular music and the Revolution

The study of popular music in Latin America has only relatively recently been seen as a subject worth of study. Béhague maintains that it was not taken seriously until the 1960s while Pacini Hernandez notes that there was no significant body of work before the 1980s (Béhague 1991: 65; Pacini Hernandez 2003:14). Scholars in Cuba, as with the rest of the region, have concentrated on folkloric cultural forms at the expense of popular ones and, like ethnomusicologists in many parts of the world, have seen popular musical forms as less pure or culturally authentic, ignoring commercial recordings as source material.

The influence of Fernando Ortiz, outlined above, has been a crucial factor in the higher status of studies of folkloric culture in Cuba. Ortiz, although keen to stress that folklore could be urban, did not consider commercial popular forms his remit, and later Cuban scholars who studied *son montuno* would either concentrate on earlier forms before the expansion of the sextets (eg Alén Rodriguez 1998; León 1974) or document more broadly, and as part of a wider study of Cuban popular music, orchestral changes and the influence of jazz (eg Linares 1979). The type of detailed analysis that featured in writing on folklore has been notably absent from studies of popular music, and a hierarchy remains in Cuba in which many developments in urban popular music of the last seventy years remain under-represented in scholarship. Historical approaches have fared better, with N. Fernandez (1989) and Tamayo (1995) examining the interplay between popular and classical in their studies of Manuel

Saumell and Ernesto Lecuona respectively.

Political decisions have also affected how different musical genres are perceived. By strongly supporting folkloric musicians within state-funded troupes for example, Fidel Castro's government has inadvertently downgraded popular styles - urban and foreign-influenced - in the minds of researchers. So while there has been a considerable amount of work on music in general published since the revolution, the focus for writing on popular music in contemporary Cuba has remained the journalistic, aimed at the general reader. While magazines such as *Temas, Bohemia, Clave* and *Revolución y Cultura* offer a wealth of articles on diverse aspects of Cuban music, the emphasis, as with most music journalism, is on the personalities and profiles of the artists. Moreover, this approach often divorces individual musicians from broader musical trends, and in articles ranging from those by Arial (1998) Tabares (1993) and Armenteros (1998) through to the interviews of Mayra Martínez with pianists such as Lilí Martínez, Frank Emilio and Chucho Valdéz (1993), musicians are presented as larger-than-life personalities with an innate musical ability which transcends tradition. However, writers such as Leonardo Acosta have consistently tackled wider issues in the Cuban press, such as the perceived 'crisis' in Cuban music immediately after the Revolution, problems of distribution and marketing in the Cuban recording industry, Rock music and Cuban jazz (Acosta 1982,1983, 1993, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003).

The strong Marxist influence in academic thought during the sixties and seventies discouraged the study of popular music, as it was often considered a continuation of the social status quo, in which standardised forms were passively consumed by an unthinking public (cf. Waterman 1990: 4). However, Cuban writers, rather than ignoring popular music as a whole, have created a discourse surrounding music as a commercial enterprise which they invoke in the criticism of pre-Revolutionary musical life on the island. Linares, for example, argues that the negative aspects of the 'cultural industry' disappeared with the Revolution (Linares 1974: 168). Torres, more positively, notes how the commercialisation of music could have far-reaching results, such as the different sonorities achieved by the *charanga* of Antonio Arcaño in alternative instrumental line-ups, dictated by the differing demands of live performance and radio (Torres 1995: 189). León meanwhile devotes the final chapter of *Del Canto y el Tiempo* to a critical appraisal of pre-Revolutionary musical life in Cuba, in which, for example, commercial interests forced the simplification of rhythms and vocal styles, and even magazine articles and interviews could be seen as exploiting performers. He contrasts this with the different relationship between performer and public created by the Revolution, in which there are no false divisions in musical styles, such as those created for niche marketing, and all music, whether professional or amateur, is created to benefit society as a whole (León 1974: 279-290).

North American and foreign influence in general is also a subject of criticism by post-Revolutionary Cuban writers. Linares, for example, criticises pre-Revolutionary cabarets, many of them foreign owned, for their invitations to foreign 'artists and singers whose reputation was hyped by commercial interests' and talks of the 'Yankee penetration' of Cuban culture before the Revolution (Linares 1974: 166-168, 158).[11] However, given the strength of Cuban culture, many writers regard this invasion as benign and largely unsuccessful. León highlights the flood of books on orchestral arranging

[11] Artistas y cantantes de fama prefabricada por el processo mercantilista.

that arrived from the United States with the emergence of swing in the 1930s, encouraging the use of American-style techniques, and maintains that most Cuban ensembles were generally unaffected by them (1974: 282-283). Likewise, Martínez Rodríguez argues that North American 'interference' in Cuban musical life was resisted even by Cuban jazz bands: 'in many of these 'Americanised' groups, the *creole* was imposed with the incorporation of a battery of percussion instruments and a repertoire that emerged from music with popular and folkloric elements' (1998: 118-119).[12]

Not all Cuban writers have been so critical of foreign influences in Cuban music. Leonardo Acosta has consistently championed both Cuban jazz and the Latin jazz fusion that resulted from the movements of Cuban musicians between in the United States and Cuba. In his most recent work *Cubano Be Cubano Bop* (2003) Acosta traces these interactions over the last 100 years, highlighting the continuing interdependence of Cuban and North American jazz and presenting the most complete work on the subject to date.

The period that has presented the most problems for Cuban scholars has been the twenty years immediately prior to the Revolution. While this period is often seen as a musical golden age by non-Cubans, or Cubans in exile (eg Díaz Ayala 1981, Evora 2003), Cuban writers have had to reconcile this reputation with criticism of its political and social deficiencies. As a result, the recognition of Cuban musicians who left the country in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution has been slow. Helio Orovio, for example, has explained how the publishers of his *Diccionario de la Música Cubana* (1981) insisted that he exclude mention of musicians or groups who had left the country after the Revolution (Valverde 1997:168). This exclusion affected ensembles as well known and respected as the *conjunto* Sonora Matancera, who were finally reinstated in the 2004 edition.

The Influence of Ortiz

Fernando Ortiz's concentration on the African heritage as the key to Cuban culture has continued with later scholars, and his influence can be felt in the ongoing emphasis on the study of the Afro-Cuban at the expense of the Hispanic. Although Linares (1979) devotes a chapter to *Elementos Hispánicos*, and more recently Eli Rodríguez (1999) examines Cuban-Spanish links, other writers devote far less attention to this aspect of Cuban culture. Both León (1974) and Alén Rodriguez (1998, 2001) present Cuban musical history as a process of development from the African and Afro-Cuban through the emergence of new Cuban forms during the Republic to music under the Revolution.

In presenting Cuban musical history in this way, the African contribution remains in the past, as a static antecedent. Karin Barber's observation in the context of Africa, that 'the traditional is frozen into place as an origin or influence, which is co-opted to authenticate the modern by providing it with roots' has relevance here (Barber1997; 1). While both León and Alén Rodríguez stress that Afro-Cuban religious music, for example, is a living tradition, the Afro-Cuban is clearly seen as the original precursor to more authentically Cuban forms.

The preoccupation with musical origins has also encouraged the categorisation of Cuban

[12] en muchas de estas agrupaciones 'americanizadas' lo criollo se fue imponiendo con la incorporación de una batería de instrumentos de percusión y un repertorio que partía de composiciones con elementos de nuestra música popular y folklórica.

musical forms into "complexes" (from the Spanish *complejo*), in other words a family of genres and its sub-forms (eg Alén Rodríguez 1992, 1998, 2001; Evora 2003; Manuel 1995). While this can clarify the range and variety within specific musical genres on the island, it downplays the mutual influence across genres and, in particular, the regular movement of musicians, especially pianists, between different types of ensemble. Reviewing Alén Rodríguez's *De lo Afrocubano a la Salsa: géneros musicales de Cuba,* for example, in which the author divides Cuban music into five complexes - *son*, *rumba*, *danzón*, *canción* and *punto guajiro* - Jorge Duany notes that this gives a fragmented view of Cuban music, based more on diffusionist theories about their origins than their role in Cuban society and discourages a more integrated approach to musical development (Duany 1995: 94-95).

Literature on Salsa

Literature on salsa can provide a different and more focussed perspective on *son montuno* and the role of the piano within the *conjunto.* Many studies provides a historical outline of the development of *son montuno* as a backdrop to specific instrumental developments in salsa, and their description of the later standardisation of instrumental roles can be useful in tracing specific elements. It is therefore an important resource in the examination of the *conjunto* piano style.

There is, however, considerable argument over the extent to which salsa takes its foundations from Cuban music. Berrios Miranda maintains that much of this emphasis has been as a result of English language studies focusing on New York, and the Cuban community there, rather than the more diverse focus of Spanish language studies: 'The notion of salsa as a mere reinterpretation of Afro-Cuban music has been given prominence because of who is writing about it and where the research has been conducted' (2003:48).

Nevertheless, writers such as Mauleón and performers such as Charlie Palmieri, Celia Cruz and even the Puerto Rican Tito Puente stress the unique contribution of Cuban music to the formation of pan-American salsa (Berrios Miranda 2003: 52, 55). Thus, the Cuban link is widely accepted and the literature on salsa provides a variety of approaches to its Cuban origins. Steward (1999) and Calvo Ospina (1995) treat pre-Revolutionary Cuban music as the precursor to salsa in the United States, stressing the exodus of Cuban musicians in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution. Works such as Gerard/Sheller (1989) Campos (1996, 1998) and Mauleón (1993, 1999) aim to give background knowledge to salsa players and emphasise *son montuno* and other Cuban genres as the key to successful salsa playing, while Washburne (1997) and Storm Roberts (1979) highlight the influence of Cuban musical structures in North American popular music. As with the situation within Cuba, journalism provides a rich source of material, with Salazar's *Latin Beat* articles on salsa history and the interviews of Leonardo Padura Fuentes being of particular value (Salazar: 1991, 1992, 1994, 2000, 2001; Padura Fuentes 2003).

The role of the piano in *son montuno* (and later salsa) is covered in much more detail in these salsa-related studies than in much writing specifically on *son montuno.* As I mentioned above, many Cuban writers reserve detailed musical analysis for pre-*conjunto* forms of *son montuno* and, as a result, the piano is rarely given more than a mention. While the role of the piano in pan-American salsa may be considerably more fixed and regimented than in pre-Revolutionary Cuban *son montuno*, analysis of

the piano *montuno* and its relationship to the rest of the ensemble can be equally applied to earlier manifestations. Washburne (1998) analyses how flexible rhythmic relationships between instruments within the *tumbao* create a sense of 'swing' while Mauleón (1999) covers in great detail the development of both a general popular piano style and, more specifically the many different stylistic variations of piano *montuno*, relating it to key concepts such as the *clave* rhythm and demonstrating its wide diffusion in pan-American salsa. In addition Manuel (1998) examines the role of improvisation in the wider world of 'Latin Dance Music', concentrating on the piano as the instrument that 'embodies... certain quintessential features of Latin improvisation', in a detailed analysis of the Latin piano solo (1998: 139).

Popular Music in Cuba, Social Context and the Pre-Revolutionary Period

The study of popular music has often seemed to be more concerned with audiences than musicians or music itself. Negus points out that 'how people receive, interpret and use music as a cultural form' has been 'one of the most influential strands of reasoning in studies of popular music since the 1970s' (Negus 1996: 8). Wade outlines a 'conceptual toolbox' of regular themes in world popular music studies such as appropriation; folklorisation; commodification; hegemony and resistance; tradition and modernity; global and local; authenticity and imitation; identity and expressive form; (Wade 2004: 273-274). This toolbox of themes presents a comprehensive approach to the study of popular music and provides a useful way of linking seemingly disparate musical traditions and revealing parallels between global audiences. However, as Timothy Taylor notes, music is also sound and it is this element that is neglected, both in Wade's list and in much writing on popular music (Taylor 1997: xviii).

The study of Cuban popular music, has, until recently, been less affected by this trend. As I mentioned above, a feature of literature on Cuban music by both Cuban and foreign writers has been the emphasis, until recently, on documentation and technical analysis (of folkloric styles) or biographical and journalistic (of popular styles) at the expense of social interpretation or contextualisation. The information blockade, which has hindered the translation and publication of Cuban works outside the country, has, at the same time, left Cuban scholars less aware of the debates surrounding the study of both traditional and popular music. The interpretation of the role and meaning of traditional music in a popular context, for example, or of the regeneration of one by the other, have not been subjects that have received much attention in Cuban writing. This is echoed in the lack of discussion over the transformation of traditional styles, both sacred and secular, in popular dance music.

Amongst non-Cuban writers there has been a wider debate in the study of both folkloric and popular genres. The most comprehensive and detailed study of Cuban popular music and its social and historical context is Sublette (2004). In the first of a projected two volumes, he covers in detail the development of Cuban popular music from pre-conquest African and Spanish musical forms until 1952. Carrying on from Storm Roberts (1979), he also views Cuba as an essential part of North American popular music history. In the study of contemporary Cuban music, Daniel (1995) and Vélez (2000) have taken *rumba* and Afro-Cuban religious drumming respectively, and situated them within

the wider social context of contemporary Cuba (and, in the case of Vélez, into the Cuban diaspora) while Hagedorn (2001) debates the problematic nature of recreating religious music in secular performance. Meanwhile, Perna (2001, 2005) links the political crisis of the 1990s and the *Periodo Especial,* the period of austerity measures following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the rise and overwhelming popularity of *timba*, with its challenging lyrics and musical virtuosity.

The most complete historical sources for the period between the emergence of *son montuno* in Havana in the early 1920s, and the 1959 Revolution, are provided by Moore (1997) and Garcia (2003, 2006). They successfully challenge the lack of research on both the social context for *son montuno* and the racial restrictions faced by musicians themselves, and blend social and historical data to create a detailed picture of Cuban popular music in the 1920s, 30s and 40s. Stressing that musical choices were often dictated by social and racial preconceptions, they highlight extra-musical factors as a way of understanding Cuban music during this period. Although, in the case of García, containing extensive musical analysis, the focus in both is less on musical relationships within the ensemble than its relationship with audiences and the increasingly important music industry.

Moore's work covers the 1920s and 30s, a period in which *son montuno* slowly gained social acceptance as a 'national' music, charting the changing attitudes of Cuban society towards the genre and highlighting the role of the mass media in its popularity. He contrasts *son montuno*'s grassroots development with the success of Cuban and international 'cabaret rumba' - a genre performed by jazz bands from the 1920s onwards in first class cabarets and hotels. This was a musically simplified version of *son montuno,* stressing 'exotic' and 'African' elements in its dance presentations, and Moore uses this contrast to make a wider comment on Cuban society during this period.

García provides a detailed examination of the options available to black musicians in 1940s Havana with his work on Arsenio Rodríguez. With an increasing number of white musicians becoming involved in *son montuno*, groups became racially categorised, echoing the earlier social and racial divides between the *conjuntos* and other types of musical ensemble. Beer gardens and dance academies still provided the most work for black musicians, along with (black) social clubs, while white social clubs, such as those based on affiliation with Spanish regions, rarely employed anyone other than white bands. Likewise the top class cabarets and tourist venues were white-only. There was also a geographical divide, with the top class cabarets and white social clubs being in central Havana while black social clubs and beer gardens were out of the centre of town, overwhelmingly in Marianao (García 2003:67-82). While García's emphasis is on *soneros* and the social situation of black *conjuntos*, his work remains an excellent source for the popular music industry in general during this period and highlights the role of an exceptional individual without divorcing this from the musical context.

Other scholars have stressed the overlap between the development of North American jazz, Cuban jazz and *son montuno* during the pre-Revolutionary period. Leymarie (2002) and Waxer (1994) concentrate on the parallel development and interdependence of Cuban and American popular musical forms from the 1920s onwards. Acosta (2003) traces jazz in Cuba from its earliest manifestations, stressing the overlap between *conjuntos* and jazz bands in which solo styles of improvisation, particularly trumpet and piano, became characteristic of later jazz and salsa, and Evora (2003) provides

a comprehensive overview of all popular musical forms, and their main exponents, as a prelude to the next fifty years of musical development. These writers examine the interplay between jazz and *son montuno* and avoid treating these styles as a source or root of the emerging Afro-Cuban jazz in the United States or dismissing the 1930s as a precursor to the better-known 40s and 50s.

There has been little written about specific instruments within Cuban popular music in this, or any other period. Lapidus (2005) provides a general overview of the role of the *tres* in contemporary *changüi* as part of a descriptive study of the genre, but it contains little historical detail on the instrument's origins. Davies (2003) examines the history of *son montuno* from the point of view of the trumpet in his study of Félix Chappottín and 'Chocolate' Armenteros, analysing their contribution to both the development of the *conjunto* and to a specific style of trumpet improvisation, and like García, uses the example of exceptional individuals to illuminate a wider study of instrumental technique and style. His approach is primarily descriptive, using transcription and analysis to map the development of the Cuban trumpet performance style and trace its wider dissemination in salsa. Mauleón's study of the piano *montuno* in the wider world of salsa (1999) is the most comprehensive study of the instrument in Latin music as a whole, and spans a wide range of periods, locations and styles but, inevitably, has limited space for early piano developments in Cuba. No scholar has yet made a detailed study of the role of the piano in the *conjunto* or contrasted it with other types of ensemble such as the *charanga* orchestra and the Cuban jazz band.

3. Methodology, sources and issues

My argument is based on the primacy of performance within *son montuno,* and commercial recordings provide the most comprehensive, and in many cases the only, body of evidence as to the development of a distinctive *conjunto* piano style. Although the transcription and analysis of recordings is an important part of my work, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary. Aparcio and Jáquez note that the study of Latin American popular music can include ethnomusicology, anthropology, performance studies, history, Latin American studies, dance and gender studies (2003: 2-3). Perna, for example, in his study of contemporary *timba*, uses classic ethnomusicological tools such as fieldwork, attending rehearsals, interviews and transcription and analysis of recordings, though cautioning that these can be limited with regard to popular music (Perna 2005: 11). Agawu also acknowledges that, in his own work, such an interdisciplinary approach can be problematic but argues that it can give a sense of coherence to otherwise disparate elements of research (1995: 3-4).

I likewise have used all of these techniques, though given the historical nature of the subject, the transcription and analysis of original commercial recordings has formed the bulk of my research. There are ongoing debates about using staff notation for describing African, and by extension Afro-American music (see for example Kubik 1994:38) and much of the literature on popular music in these regions contains little or no musical transcription. Agawu, however, argues that Western notation can be a valuable asset for both African and Afro-American music and should not be dismissed as a system more suited to Western art music (Agawu 2003:64-68). Moreover, the piano is particularly well suited to this type of transcription and staff notation has been used in the publication of Cuban popular music since the early 20th century. As with jazz, however, any printed material is a very loose guide to what is

actually played by members of the ensemble. I am therefore adding a more descriptive level, that of transcribing the essentially improvised *conjunto* piano, to the prescriptive scores from the period.

Sources for printed material from this period, however, are few. Havana's Museo de la Música holds some popular music scores from the early part of the century, but there are very few for the *son montuno* played by *conjuntos*; moreover they only contain the bass, brass and *coro* parts, with the *guìa* for the piano being a version of *coro* and bass, rather than an independent piano *montuno*. The lack of a specific piano part confirms the flexible nature of the piano *montuno,* its role as part of the rhythm section as a whole and the importance of improvisation as a part of a pianist's expertise, but means that there is no written record, from the time, of what was played.

In studying popular music, commercial recordings are the key to the dissemination and commercial success of many genres and too important a resource to ignore. This is particularly true when dealing with a period such as the 1940s where most of the musicians are no longer alive. Therefore, a major strand in my methodology has been the transcription and analysis of commercially produced recordings of Cuban popular music from the 1940s, which provide evidence of what pianists actually played within the *conjunto*. As with Arom's study of Central African music, I am treating this as the study of a non- notated system of musical creation with a view to revealing what he calls the 'underlying systemic organisation' behind its construction (Arom 1991:xx). Arom's aim is the establishment of a model for each part, 'a visual reference of the features which are relevant within a given musical system', without ornament or variation (Arom 1991: 137).

Given the restrictions of three-minute and often indistinct recordings however, my aim is less the establishment of a perfect model for each piece of music (which could of course differ radically with a different pianist) than the examination of different techniques and approaches that pianists used in the early years of the *conjunto*. My transcriptions can then stand as representative structures of these different approaches.

Berliner uses transcription in a similar way, transcribing compositional materials and showing their development in a variety of contexts, and his approach allows for the contrasting treatment that different performers can bring to the same piece of music. These can only be a snapshot of the infinite variation possible, but serve to illustrate the ways in which the musical material can be developed or varied. While Berliner details the ways in which individual musicians developed their musical material within a complex harmonic system, my transcriptions reveal the development of a specific approach to piano playing, in which shared rhythmic relationships were paramount and in which individual variation had less importance. It is for this reason that I have chosen to look at an overall style rather then concentrate on one specific musician (as David García has done with Arsenio Rodríguez). The development of the *conjunto* piano style was, in effect, a shared process in which personal idiosyncrasies could be incorporated within the overall style, and in which certain norms were established and formalised.

The use of commercial recordings presents its own problems, however. How can we know what role the record company played in determining what material was selected for recording or releasing? In the 1940s, as today, record labels and producers made decisions regarding which genres, groups and/or songs to record which did not necessarily reflect their popularity or importance.

However, in the case of the *conjuntos*, radio played a key part in their promotion and dissemination, and competition between stations ensured a wide mix of potential signings for record companies. Nevertheless, Sublette suggests that something as simple as running out of wax masters (still in use until the late 1940s) could curtail a recording session, limiting a band or individual's output (2004: 444).

With the development of digital technology, many *conjunto* songs have been re-issued on CD compilations, and record companies have made decisions regarding which songs are included, resulting in an inevitable bias towards the better known groups. I have managed to avoid some of this bias thanks to the Díaz Ayala Collection at Florida International University; there I was able to access the large collection of 78 recordings which include many of the lesser known groups, allowing a much wider perspective. In addition, David García of the University of North Carolina, whose work on Arsenio Rodríguez was an invaluable resource, kindly made me cassette copies of some of Arsenio's earlier songs, as yet unavailable on CD. These two sources also helped me avoid some of the problems associated with the use of commercial recordings such as the difficulty in establishing dates or personnel.[13]

As I outline in more detail in Chapter 5, rapidly changing personnel in many *conjuntos* mean that tracing the performers on specific recordings can be difficult. Line-up could change rapidly, and movement between *conjuntos* was common, especially for pianists. Conjunto Casino, for example, had five pianists between 1945 and 1951: René Urbino, Augustín Mercier, who joined specifically for a tour of Venezuela, Pepé Delgado, Roberto Alvarez and Ñico Cevedo. (Díaz Ayala 2002, Sección01C: 436). Two of these also recorded with other groups: Pepé Delgado with Conjuntos Colonial and Niagara, and Ñico Cevedo with Kubavana (TCD082; 047; 068; Díaz Ayala 2002, Sección03IJK: 1362).

In the recordings made by Conjunto Los Astros between 1948 and 1950, four pianists are credited on the Tumbao compilation: Carlitos Moore, Silvio Contreras, David Palomares and Rubén Gonzalez. (TCD062). Of these four, Silvio Contreras also recorded with Jovenes del Cayo, while Rubén Gonzalez had previously worked with Arsenio Rodríguez and played trumpet for Conjunto Colonial (Díaz Ayala 2002, Sección05R: 2232; TCD047). The sleeve notes for this recording do not (or perhaps cannot) say which pianist is playing on each song and I have been unable to establish this with any degree or certainty. Likewise David Garica has been unable to confirm which pianist - René Hernandez or Adolpho O'Reilly - is performing on the 1941 and 1942 recordings by Arsenio Rodríguez (García 2003: 541-575).

Some groups, such as Conjunto Colonial, were formed for the purpose of recording only. These groups were known as *conjuntos fantasmas* (ghost groups) and could have an extremely flexible line up (TCD047). Colonial was founded in 1946 by three musicians who were already working with other groups: guitarist Senén Suárez of the Cuanabó Trio, pianist Carlos Faxas of Orquesta Cosmopolita and singer Nelo Sosa, who had performed with Conjunto Casino. The group recorded between 1946 and 1947 before splitting up. It was later reformed by Nelo Sosa with a new line up and a series of pianists - Rey Díaz Calvet, Pepé Delgado and at one point Pedro 'Peruchín' Justiz (TCD047,

[13] See also Gronow 1963; 1983.

Leymarie 2002: 129). In the recordings I examine here all four pianists are represented and I have, in this case, been able to cross-reference the dates with the Díaz Ayala Discography to confirm who is playing on individual recordings.

The transcription of piano *montunos* and solos also presents technical problems that are specific to the period. Technical limitations of recording, such as the use of only one or two microphones for a whole group, mean that the piano is barely audible in many songs. Piano solos fare better, as fewer instruments were involved and the microphone was often moved closer to the piano for the duration of the solo, but *montunos* are often lost amid brass and vocals (René Espí interview 27.4.04). While some of the surface noise has been reduced in CD re-issues, the issue of balance remains problematic and limits the amount of transcription possible. This is not confined to musical elements; even with the help of Cuban contacts, I have been unable to transcribe the lyrics in a small number of songs.

Moreover, is it valid to transcribe examples of piano *montunos* and solos, and examine them as representative of a broad genre in which improvisation and variation play such a strong part? As I have already discussed, piano *montunos* are not fixed entities but frameworks for creation and, as such, can vary considerably within a song. However, I argue that even if they are not consistent, or indeed even because of their inconsistency, the description and transcription of piano *montunos* can give us a glimpse of how pianists created and varied their *montunos* and can serve as representative structures of a musical process. In the absence of scores or written records of what was played, recordings provide the basis for the reconstruction of the models used for musical creation. Likewise with recorded piano solos; although considerably shorter than in live performance, they can at the very least serve as a snapshot of a specific moment within a performance and, like the piano *montuno*, it is the manner of construction rather than the finished product that is of interest to me in this thesis.

Rather than trying to reconstruct the historical development of a musical process or style via written scores, eye-witness accounts or examination of contemporary renditions, commercial recordings give us access to specific moments, albeit within the recording restrictions of the time, from which we can gain an insight into wider musical trends. Moreover, these recording conditions meant that the situation was closer to the capture of a live performance than the contemporary studio equivalent, giving it a much greater immediacy and directness. With no multi-tracking, the band performed each song in front of one microphone as a whole unit. Frequently there was only one take, and minor mistakes were ignored. Sublette describes a 1937 RCA recording session, which took place in a converted room in a nightclub, thus: 'In those three days at that makeshift studio, RCA..... recorded until they ran out of blank wax masters, for a total of 141recordings, mostly in single takes, by 24 different groups' (Sublette 2004: 444). Moreover, given that in the 1940s the *conjunto* was a relatively new format, performers, especially pianists, were less likely to relax into an established style or rely on clichéd material, giving a greater sense of spontaneity to the performance. In no sense can these recordings be compared to the carefully perfected and technically sophisticated renditions of today.

The next 'concentric circle' of my research, to use Arom's analogy, has been the use of interviews with musicians and scholars in Cuba, the United States and London, some conducted by

myself during the research period and some accessed at the Díaz Ayala Collection. During my field trips to Havana in 2002 and 2004, a major part of my work method was attending and observing rehearsals of groups that play in the original *conjunto* style in order to assess to what extent the original *conjunto* piano style has been retained in this type of group. One of these was the current line-up of Las Estrellas de Chappottín, originally the continuation (under the direction of Felix Chappottín) of the *conjunto* of Arsenio Rodríguez after his departure to the United States in 1951; another was Grupo Arsenio Rodríguez, directed by Rolando Avila, a cousin of Arsenio, and again dedicated to continuing his *conjunto* style. Attendance at these rehearsals provided insights into working methods that informed my subsequent interviews with the pianists from these two ensembles. Additionally, I was able to record the *tres* and piano lines in isolation, in order to more clearly hear the interlocking counterpoint between the two instruments that is a key part of Arsenio's style of *son montuno*. (The transcription of this will form part of my sixth chapter, in which I examine in detail the differences between Arsenio's *conjunto* style and his contemporaries). Although I have avoided examining commercial recreations of Arsenio's style - such as those by Sierra Maestra or Manuel '*Guajiro*' Mirabal - because of the many issues of musical change that this type of recreation presents, I argue that in this instance the recording of these isolated instrumental parts is a valid means of revealing not just the musical structures involved but also the way in which different *conjunto* piano styles have overlapped in the intervening period.

In addition to interviewing the pianists of those two groups, I conducted extensive interviews in Cuba with musicians, writers and academics. As I have been unable to find musicians still living who formed a part of the early *conjunto* period, I interviewed musicians from later decades, such as Rolando Baró, pianist with Conjunto Casino in the 1950s; relatives of *conjunto* musicians such as René Espí, son of Roberto Espí, one of the most important singers with Conjunto Casino in the 1950s; and contemporary musicians such as Cesar 'Pupi' Pedroso, former pianist with Los Van Van, for an insight into how the period, and the emergence of the *conjunto* piano, is perceived by current Cuban popular musicians. I also interviewed jazz pianists Roberto Carcasses and Lilia Expósito Pino (Bellita from the group Bellita y Jazztumbatá) to discuss the relationship between jazz and *conjunto* style piano, and other Cuban musical figures such as guitarist Pablo Menendez, writer Leonardo Acosta and José Reyes, researcher in the Havana Museo de la Música. In the United States I interviewed Latin/salsa pianist and writer Rebeca Mauleón, author of, among other works, 101 Montunos (see review of literature, above). In the UK, salsa pianists Roland Perrin and John Crawford also provided insights into how the foundations laid by *conjunto* pianists continue in contemporary salsa styles.

This thesis fully reconstructs the emergence and development of the *conjunto* piano, putting the transcription and analysis of the original recordings at the heart of the investigation, in order to reveal the musical structures and practices that emerged during this crucial period of its development. *Conjunto* pianists combined continuity and innovation to create a new role for the piano within the ensemble and to develop what would become a blueprint for subsequent piano styles. My research reveals the extent to which this new approach was based on African principles of organisation, and contests the common paradigm of opposing cultural forces to include the piano in discussion of the African presence in Cuba. This is the first time that extensive musical transcription of key elements of

the *conjunto* piano style have been presented in this way, enabling a much deeper analysis of its internal structure, rapid development and ongoing influence.

Chapter 1 *Son Montuno,* the *Tumbao* and the role of the Piano

The *conjunto* piano style that I examine in this thesis represented a new approach to playing the piano within an ensemble, and a break with past practice, both classical and popular. Although *conjunto* pianists echoed other popular ensemble styles in providing general harmonic accompaniment and melodic ornamentation in the *largo* (verse) section of a song, in the *montuno* section they joined the tightly organised rhythmic structure of the shared *tumbao* and it was in this section that the most radical changes were seen. That these changes took place in a genre with the importance of *son montuno* is not a surprise, given its wide-reaching influence on Cuban popular music as a whole. For pianists in popular music of all styles, *son montuno* and this unique approach to piano playing represented an opportunity to revitalise their role.

In order to fully appreciate the magnitude of this transformation, it is vital not only to examine the pre-*conjunto* period of Cuban popular music (covered in Chapters 2 and 3), but to establish working definitions of essential elements of *son montuno* and the role of the piano in the ensemble. Much of the Cuban literature on *son montuno* concentrates on the sextet at the expense of the *conjunto* (eg Alén Rodríguez 1998, León 1974) and specific information on the role of the piano, whether in the *conjunto* period or more recently, is scarce. Many structural and stylistic elements of *son montuno,* have, however, become formally established and defined by the practitioners of pan-American salsa. Salsa iterature, though overwhelmingly practical in orientation (eg Mauleón 1999, Campos 1996), can therefore play a role in the historical examination of the *conjunto* piano. With the consolidation of essentially Cuban features in salsa, current definitions can be used as a starting point in the examination of instrumental relationships within *son montuno.*

In this chapter I present a generic overview of *son montuno,* and in particular the rhythmic structure of the *tumbao*, the shared ostinato of the rhythm section, referring to the literature on salsa to help define key elements. This is not to provide a history of *son montuno* but rather to use current definitions to illuminate past practice, and it remains, therefore, outside of a chronological framework. An analysis of the essential elements of the piano in what could be seen as 'timeless' *son montuno* and salsa can help to clarify the early development of the *conjunto* style and establish its earliest manifestations. In the crucial period of *conjunto* formation in the early 1940s, these musical features were not necessarily clearly formulated or present in all instances, but it is important to define them and establish their role in later music in order to trace their earliest presence.

The relationship between *son montuno* and salsa, and indeed the existence of salsa as a meaningful description of a host of stylistic musical features, has been the subject of some debate.[14] Certainly, the emergence of salsa has a more complex history than the initial Cuban post-Revolutionary exodus to the United States would suggest, as it represents not the preservation or continuation of an existing musical genre but the amalgamation of many genres and stylistic features from Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and the United States and beyond. For a number of reasons, however,

[14] See, for example, Acosta (2003b), Berríos Miranda (2002), Pacini Hernández (1998, 2003), Mauleón (1993, 1999), Manuel (1994, 1998), Loyola Fernandez (2000),Storm Roberts (1979).

many musical elements remain rooted in specific Cuban structures and practices.

Firstly, Cuba had already had a disproportionate influence on the development of musical forms in other parts of the Caribbean, particularly Puerto Rico, and in the United States itself.[15] For this reason, many non-Cuban musicians were familiar with Cuban musical features and structures, already established within a variety of American (in the widest sense) musical genres.

Secondly, given the sudden and frequently unwanted nature of their departure, many exiled Cubans in the immediate post-revolutionary period retained a political interest in the self-conscious preservation of cultural, and especially musical, forms, as a way of rejecting the new political regime in Cuba. Pandora Hopkins, in her study of musical change, notes that 'being a particularly stylised form of communication, music is especially prone to reflect ideals of preservation' (Hopkins 1976: 453). The presence of many well-known musicians amongst the exiles - such as the entire Conjunto Sonora Matancera - would have facilitated this process. The consolidation of the Cuban presence in the United States strengthened musical nostalgia within the growing diaspora cultural market where, as Nercessian, writing on Armenian music underlines, 'the 'past' has an even greater sanctity than in the homeland. The diasporan consumers feel they are buying the older, purer culture of their homeland' (Nercessian 2000: 89-90). This likewise discourages a challenge to what are seen as basic musical elements of Cuban music.

Thirdly between 1959 and 1988 (when modifications were made to the American Trading with the Enemy Act), the complete lack of official cultural contact between Cuba and the United States meant that pre-Revolutionary Cuban music was the starting point for many North American salsa musicians, both Cuban and non-Cuban; moreover, in the sixties and seventies deliberate 'recreations' of the music of performers such as Arsenio Rodríguez were common (Pacini Hernandez 1998; 110-111, Gerard/Sheller 1989: 4).

Finally, the structure of *son montuno* facilitates the combination of continuity and innovation. As I mentioned in the introduction, one way of approaching both the piano *montuno*, and the shared *tumbao,* is to examine them as 'models', a method that Arom demonstrates in his study of Central African horn ensembles (1991). While no performance of a piece of music is exactly the same, there is a consistency in the model that reinforces the specific stylistic features of *son montuno*. Nettl, in his study of musical change, stresses this element of consistency, noting that 'Improvisation over a model, each performance signifying change of some sort, causes the model itself to remain constant' (Nettl 1983: 186). In this way, many structural and stylistic features of *son montuno* have remained consistent within a constantly changing musical environment. For Blacking, 'the most interesting and characteristic features of music are not stylistic change and individual variation in performance, but *non*-change and the repetition of carefully rehearsed passages of music' (Blacking 1995: 154).

However, it is important to restate that this analysis of the role of the piano does not represent an exhaustive study of the instrument in *son montuno* and all of its later manifestations, both in Cuba and beyond. Rather I am using information from a variety of sources, Cuban and non-Cuban, to

[15] See Manuel (1994) for Cuban/Puerto Rican musical exchange; Storm Roberts (1979) and Sublette (2004) for Cuban musical presence in the United States; Crespo (2003) for the role of Mexican cinema in the promotion of Cuban music.

provide a backdrop to the examination of the essential features of the crucial *conjunto* period of the 1940s.

As I mentioned above, much of the literature on salsa and salsa piano is in the form of manuals that outline the essential knowledge that is needed in order to play within the genre. My approach in this chapter represents a wider analysis of *son montuno* and the role of the piano within the *tumbao*. In addition to summarising existing information, I present a summary of the theoretical concepts relating to the continuation of African musical principles of musical organisation in the Americas, and discuss their relevance to the study of *son montuno*. Using these theoretical concepts, I then analyse the *tumbao*, the shared rhythmic ostinato that underpins *son montuno*, examine how the piano is integrated into this interlocking structure and contrast rhythmic relationships between instrumentalists in *son montuno* with those in *rumba* in order to show parallels between the two genres.

While the influence of the *tres* was a key factor in the development of the *conjunto* piano, instrumental relationships within the *tumbao* and the strengths of the instrument itself refined it further. The *conjunto* piano conforms to Nketia's idea of 'functional substitution' in moving from being a (partial) substitute for the *tres* to becoming an established part of the ensemble, with a formalised function and structure, but it also transcends it in establishing a completely new style and approach to piano playing (Nketia 1980:16).

Although the *conjunto* piano style was a composite of influences, the fundamental change in the role of the instrument, from chordal accompaniment to rhythmically accented arpeggiation, was what gave it its unique and seminal quality. This was a key moment in the development of *son montuno,* and the resultant *conjunto* piano style not only influenced other Cuban musical genres, but became an internationally recognisable feature of global salsa.

1.1 *Son Montuno*

Son montuno was the Cuban dance genre in which the role of the piano was transformed. But the unprecedented influence of the genre itself had already transformed Cuban popular music, shifting its emphasis from pre-composed ballroom music, albeit with a level of improvisation, to the open-ended street style of *rumba* and other Afro-Cuban musical styles. This shift, in which the addition of an open-ended, improvised *montuno* section to another genre could transform a piece's status, from for example *bolero* to *bolero-son*, or *pregón* to *son-pregón*, signalled the growing acceptance of a different kind of musicianship in which formal training had less importance than improvisatory skill. The *montuno* section and, within it, the *tumbao*, or ostinato played by the rhythm section of bass, percussion and *tres* (later piano) was at the heart of this shift. With its cyclical structure and lack of resolution, it demanded a different set of skills from that required for a formally written piece of music with linear structure. And in symbolically uniting 'African' percussion and 'European' string instruments, with the *bongó* and *tres* remaining emblematic of the genre, *son* seemed to supersede *danzón* as the representation of the 'national', in León's words '*un himno en la boca del pueblo*' (a hymn in the mouth of the people) (León 1974:122).

Although there are examples of the use of the piano in a *son* ensemble in the 1920s (see Chapter 3) the instrument was not consistently integrated until the late 1930s. The construction of the

piano *montuno* - the short repeated cyclical figure that is played during the *montuno* section and as part of the *tumbao* - reveals a very different way of playing the instrument from the accepted practice at the time, both classical and popular. Within the *tumbao*, a musical cycle of fixed length with strict and regular repetition, the rhythmic role of the piano is paramount. Rhythmic relationships between instrumentalists dictate the accentuation of specific beats; the volume and accuracy of this aspect of the piano *montuno* is enhanced by the parallel motion of left and right hands. In this parallel motion, the piano is being treated as a melodic and rhythmic, more than harmonic instrument, with arpeggiation and movement in place of chordal harmony. The instrument no longer provides a bass and accompaniment figure but rather implies harmony by means of constant motion. It is important to note therefore how the role of the instrument within the shared *tumbao* is reflected in the nature of the piano *montuno* and how radical a change this was.

The Structural Elements of *Son Montuno*

The term *son montuno* is used to describe a musical genre and its internal musical, especially rhythmic, structures and instrumental relationships. In a wider sense, it represents an approach to musical creation, shared with jazz and other Afro-American genres, in which manner of performance and musical renewal are more important than the original musical material. In this section I examine *son montuno* from both points of view to contrast the formal structures with informal practice and to demonstrate how the relatively fixed musical relationships within the *tumbao* underpin the improvisatory quality of the music itself.

Son montuno is a Cuban sung dance genre, generally considered the first genuine synthesis of European and African musical elements to achieve mass commercial popularity (Moore 1997:89). In its most basic form, it is characterised by the interlocking of fixed and improvised percussion lines with a plucked string ostinato pattern and solo and choral singing. Sung in Spanish with a minimum of two singers, the lyrics of *sones* employ many European verse forms such as the Spanish *décima*, set to a melody in duple time with a harmonically simple accompaniment (Moore 1997; 90).

The twin instrumental symbols of the genre, the *tres* and *bongó*, could be argued to represent the bare minimum for performance of the genre (eg Robbins 1990: 190) but early ensembles ranged from duos with simply *tres* and vocals to those using *tres*, guitar, percussion (maracas, *bongó* and sometimes a scraper such as the wooden *guiro* or metal *guayo*). The bass was provided by the *marímbula* (a large African- derived lamellaphone) or the *botija* (an earthenware jug, blown through a hole in the side and with the pitch altered by means of hand movement over the top). This gave the harmony a less clearly rooted quality. The change to the acoustically clearer string bass consolidated a gradual move towards a more European, equally tempered, tuning system and the sextet format established by groups such as Sexteto Habanero in Havana in the 1920s, comprised string bass, *bongó*, maracas, plucked *tres*, strummed guitar and *claves* (played by the lead singer) (Manuel 1988: 31). Although ensemble flexibility was paramount in the early recording industry, this type of ensemble remained the template until the trumpet was added in 1927 to form the septet. Expansion continued in the late 1930s with the addition of piano, congas and more trumpets to create the *conjunto*.

Structurally *son montuno* has two sections (though some *sones* dispense with the first): a slower *largo* section which serves as a verse and introduction; and an open ended *montuno* section, in which the rhythmic relationships within the *tumbao* are established and in which the vocal soloist improvises over the cyclical ostinato, in call and response with the *coro* (chorus). Within the first, closed section the soloist is often joined by a second singer - the *segundo* - who follows the soloist's melody at what appears to be a third below but is, in fact, a more complex counterpoint based around thirds and sixths. Often in *sexteto son*, the *tres* also follows the melodic line in unison or thirds, sometimes alternating with linking flourishes, while later *conjunto* pianists were more likely to embellish the melody in the style of *danzón*. The *largo* section was not present in *son*'s earliest rural manifestations and was added when the genre became popular in urban areas (Alén 1998: 68). It was not until the early 1940s and the work of Arsenio Rodríguez that a *montuno*-only structure again became fashionable (García 2003: 137).

In the earliest forms of *son montuno,* such as *changüí*, the *montuno* section consisted of call and response between the soloist and *coro,* which could continue indefinitely.[16] Later modifications included call and response between trumpet and chorus, and by the 1940's *conjunto* a more formalised arrangement was in place. A typical arrangement of a *montuno* section for *conjunto* would begin with a section in which trumpet and then solo voice would improvise in alternation with the *coro* or *estribillo* (refrain). This would be followed by an instrumental (piano or *tres*) solo, a bridge and a final section, sometimes known as a *mambo* or *diablo*. In this, the full ensemble would return to the call and response of vocal/chorus with the full trumpet section playing a pre-composed brass counterpoint.[17]

This structure was the basis of much of the work of Arsenio Rodríguez, for example *Dame Un Cachito* (1946), *A Belen le Toca Ahora* (1948), *Juventud de Cayo Hueso* (1950) (Tumbao TCD031). *Conjuntos* such as Conjunto Casino or Kubavana - known as *guaracheros* because of their continuation of the theatrical *guaracha* tradition with its lighter, faster style - modified this structure to include repeated verses within the *montuno* section, but without radical alteration. The role of the piano in the *montuno* section thus became composed of two distinct elements: the piano *montuno* and the instrumental solo. North American salsa musicians formalised the structure further into what salsa pianist Roland Perrin calls an 'indestructible construction' (Interview 23/9/04) with a wide technical terminology for both instrumental parts and structural sections (see also Mauleón 1993).

Son *montuno* as an approach to music creation

However, within this formalised structure, there remains the original impetus behind communal Cuban music making whose precedents were less in other popular dances such as *danzón*, and more in Afro-Cuban street styles such as *rumba* and *comparsa,* in which open ended improvisation played a large part. This is not to suggest that there were no elements of improvisation in other Cuban musical styles - the *guajira* musical tradition includes improvised *controversias* between singers while, in instrumental *danzón*, the piano solos of Antonio Maria Romeu were legendary - but that these were

[16] I will cover *changüí* and other early forms of *son montuno* in chapter 2.
[17] See also Mauelon 1993:187-198, Sublette 2004: 507, Moore 1997: 90, Davies 2003: 65.

within more constrained structures.

As I mentioned above, the ease with which the structures and approaches of *son montuno* could be appended to, or joined with, other genres was one of its distinctive characteristics. Robbins notes that '*Son* becomes a way of playing, to be applied to the repertoire of other genres: when enough of the musical practices associated with *son* are present - the (rhythmic) matrix, or a prominent *tres* and *bongós*, or, most commonly a *montuno* - a piece becomes part of the *son* complex'. He adds that '*son* can be to some extent a manner rather than a repertoire ... a structure for improvisation that, like jazz, allows for considerable stylistic change over time while remaining attractive, danceable music' (Robbins 1990:190, 196). It is this flexibility that has enabled the genre to mutate rapidly; as Feijoo puts it 'the *son* has been present in the genesis of nearly all dance music within the country and the rest of the Caribbean' (Feijoo 1986:27).[18]

In treating *son montuno* as a way of approaching musical performance as well as a fixed structure, there are parallels with the study of other Afro-American and Caribbean musics. Floyd, in his discussion of African-American music, writes of 'musical tendencies' within a genre, the adaptation of African musical principles to music in the New World. He argues that it is in approach rather than structure that African musical principles can be found, and that improvised music in the Americas 'needs to be understood as a process'; in other words, the way the music is conceptualised and performed is more important than, or as important as, the end product (Floyd 1995:5, 228). Likewise, Wilson argues that this approach to performance, which he sees as an essential 'Africanness', is in the 'conceptual approach... the way of doing something, not simply something that is done' while Agawu describes African music as not a repertoire but a 'potentiality' (Wilson 1983: 3; Agawu 2003:xiv).

Both Moore and García note the strong presence of African principles of musical organisation in the *montuno* section, and the consistent repetition of the *tumbao* within this section is an essential part of this transformational approach to musical creation (Moore 1997:90, García 2003: 26). Agawu argues, in relation to African music, that repetition 'enables and stabilises; it facilitates adventure while guaranteeing not the outcome as such but the meaningfulness of adventure' (Agawu 2003:145). In the context of jazz, Monson argues that the function of repetition is to create 'a participatory musical framework against which highly idiosyncratic and innovative improvisation can take place' and that 'layered repetitions construct a context in which musical creativity can take place over successive periodic units' (Monson 1996: 89, 1999:51) These 'layered repetitions' are to be found in the relatively fixed rhythmic structures over which singers and instrumentalists improvise. It is within the confines of this strict combination of rhythmic relationships within the *tumbao* and the set order of events within the musical structure that the performer has creative freedom.

Whether in the comparatively free format of earlier forms of *son montuno* or in the more formalised arrangements of later larger ensembles, it was this aspect, symbolised by the *tumbao*, which transformed Cuban popular music. As well as being a structural element that could be appended to a song or instrumental piece of music, the *montuno* section demanded a different approach from musicians and changed the fundamental nature of musical construction. A musical approach that had

[18] El *son* cubano ha penetrado prácticamente en casi todos las génesis danzarias del pais y de las naciones del Caribe.

long been a part of Afro-Cuban musical forms such as *rumba* was for the first time present in commercial recorded music, and pianists, who had hitherto been excluded from these forms, had to respond to the challenge. A much greater emphasis on extended repetition and improvisation thus became part of the pianist's remit, both within the structure of the *tumbao* and in the performance of piano solos, when the piano was incorporated into the *son* ensemble.

The *Tumbao* of *Son Montuno*

The term *tumbao* defines both the instrumental rhythm section of a *son* ensemble and the repeated ostinato shared by this instrumental combination which serves as an accompaniment figure to vocal and instrumental improvisation. In this section I examine the *tumbao* as a set of instrumental and rhythmic relationships which have become standardised. As I mentioned above, not all of its features were present or fully developed during the early *conjunto* period it is therefore the now-established elements that I analyse in order to illustrate its rhythmic construction.

The basic instrumentation of the *tumbao* is bass, guitar, *bongó*, maracas, *claves* (the plural refers to the instrument as opposed to the rhythmic pattern) and either *tres* or, from the late 1930s, piano. In the case of Arsenio Rodríguez, one of the most influential bandleaders of the 1940s and a virtuoso *tresero*, the *tres* was retained alongside the piano, contributing to a distinctive type of *tumbao*. The *tumbadora* (conga drum) was also added in the late 1930s.

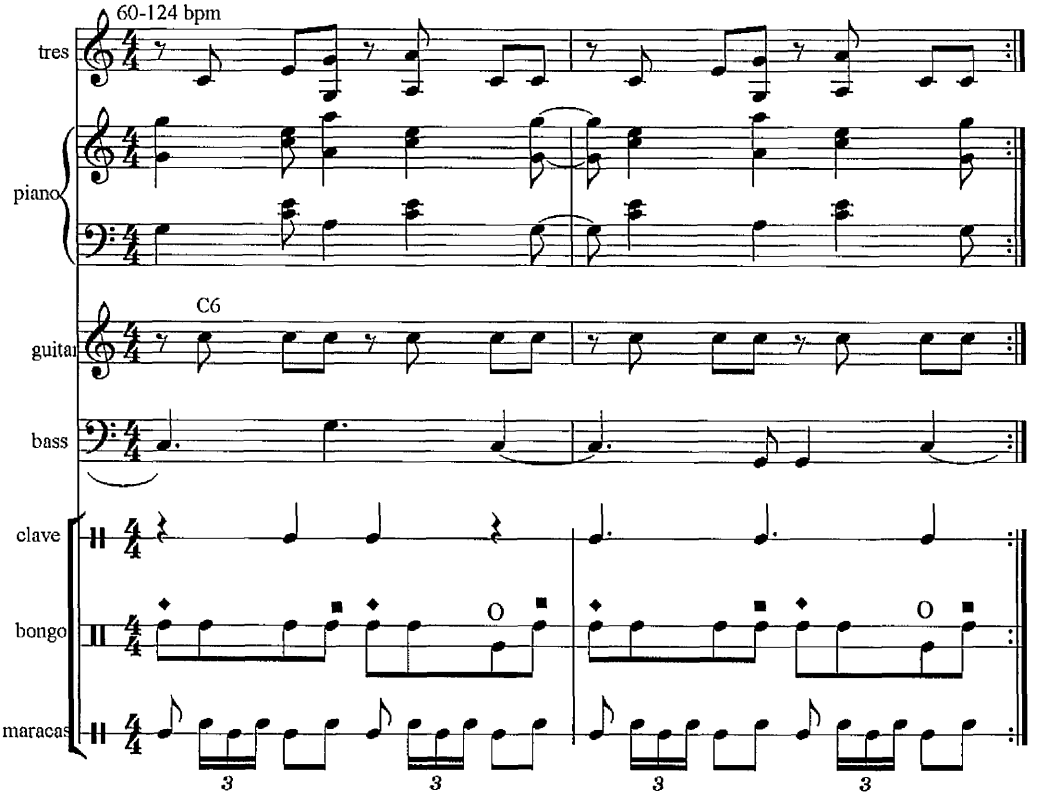
Unlike the more complex harmonic progressions of jazz, a *son montuno tumbao* is a harmonically simple ostinato, and unlike a blues sequence, it is short - typically one or two *clave* repetitions, that is two or four bars of 4/4. Manuel argues that the two-part structure of the *clave* rhythm could be described as a 'time-span' in the sense of spanning a timeline (Manuel 1985:256) and there are clear parallels with the periodicity of West African music, in which the timeline functions as an orientation device within the cycle. While many *tumbaos* have a periodicity of one or two *claves*, this need not necessarily be the case. Moreover, the periodicity of other musical elements need not be the same as that of the *clave* or *tumbao*: call and response sequences, for example, can have a periodicity of one, two or more *claves*, frequently spanning more than one *tumbao*.

The following example (1.1) is taken from Mauleón (1993: 200) showing a basic score of the instrumental relationships within a harmonically static *son montuno tumbao*. Her aim here is to show the more traditional line-up, ie one based on the sextets of the 1920s, but she has added piano to demonstrate the interplay between piano and *tres*. Due to the presence of the *tres* and its arpeggiated pattern, the piano *montuno* is more static, with no arpeggiation (though with variation throughout the song, this would change). Momentum is created by the constant syncopation and accenting of off-beats, reinforced by chords and octaves, with only the first beat of the first bar being sounded. In this, the pianist locks in with bass, *tres* and guitar who likewise avoid on-beats to the extent that, in the second bar, the only instruments sounding the first beat are the maracas and *bongó*.

The *clave* rhythm is, like all timelines, aymmetrical and is often described as having two opposing sides, the "two" side and the "three" side, referring to the number of sounded pulses; the three side is rhythmically identical to the *tresillo* rhythm, present in Cuban music since the colonial period (see Chapter 3). The *tres montuno* is *clave*-neutral, that is, rhythmically identical on both sides of the

clave rhythm. The piano *montuno* is the only instrument "in *clave*", apart from the *claves*; in other words it is rhythmically distinct on either side with a rhythmic construction that partially follows the outline of the *clave* pattern. However its rhythmic structure also functions as a counter to the *clave* rhythm, with first beat of the two side sounded (bar 1) and the first beat of the three side anticipated by a quaver. This creates a staggered rhythmic anticipation at the end of the first bar between the piano *montuno* and bass, in which the piano anticipates a quaver behind the crotchet anticipation of the bass; this feature will be examined in more detail later in this chapter. The *bongó* part is the basic *martillo* (hammer) pattern, but the player would be free to improvise throughout and (an innovation from the 1940s) switch to the cowbell part way through the *montuno* section; with the addition of a *tumbadora* with its heavy fourth-beat emphasis, the *bongosero* would have even more freedom. The diamond symbol represents a slap; the square, a heel (palm of the hand); no symbol, a toe (tips of the fingers); and the O an open tone.

Ex 1.1 Tumbao basic score



As *son montuno* is music for dance, the *tumbao* has a stabilising function and maintains the rhythmic equilibrium by means of constant repetition (Linares 1974: 107). Manuel contrasts the loose piano comping of jazz with the regular rhythmic ostinato of the piano *montuno*; while some variation is allowed, regularity and consistency are vital. (Manuel 1998: 135); Rolando Baró echoes this view in

describing the function of the *tumbao* as 'to stabilise the rhythm' (Interview 21/4/04)[19]

Analysing the *tumbao*

Cuban writers, in analysing the *tumbao*, have tended to take Fernando Ortiz as a starting point. León and Gómez Cairo continue Ortiz's argument that the *tumbao* contains three planes of contrasting timbres, each with its own distinctive rhythmic structure, which can be traced back to the African practice of trying to combine aurally the animal, vegetable and mineral in order to strengthen magic power (León 1974:128, Gomez Cairo 1995: 120). The first plane is the animal in the form of the *cuerda pulsada* (plucked string) of the *tres*, the second the vegetable in the wood and seed of maracas, *claves* and *bongo,* and the third in the metal keys of the *marímbula.* These three timbres are superimposed, each obeying an internal rhythmic structure, and the resulting combined rhythm has a greater aural clarity by virtue of the distinct timbres. In this analysis, the addition of instruments tuned to specific pitches, such as the *tres* or bass, or semi-tuned such as the *marímbula,* is a by-product of this desire to recreate distinct timbres in the performance of rhythmic combinations.

Likewise, Evora describes the *tumbao* as the 'continuous contrast and juxtaposition of different rhythmic strands' adding that 'its revolutionary quality lies in the unified polyrhythmic structure in which different melodic-rhythmic lines cross, pursue each other, meet and separate' (Evora 2003: 43,45).[20] Both Orovio and the CIDMUC (Centro de Investigación y Desarollo de la Música Cubana) encyclopaedia echo this approach, stressing that melodic instruments such as *tres* and bass are transformed, within this structure, to percussion instruments within three different rhythmical and timbral planes (Orovio 2004: 204, CIDMUC 2002: 564-568). All of these scholars stress the Afro-Cuban precedents to this type of rhythmic structure and its foundation in West African forms of rhythmic organisation, but pay little attention to the addition of fixed pitches, provided by *tres* and later piano, within this structure.

The rhythmic relationships of the *tumbao* can also be analysed with reference to Arom's work on the use of hocket in wind ensembles in Central Africa (1984, 1991). In this music, single-pitch end-blown horns, each tuned at a different pitch, combine to produce a rhythmic composite from which melodic counterpoint emerges. Unlike the very fast, evenly spaced interlocking of, for example, Ugandan xylophones, each horn has its own specific rhythm within the ensemble. Like the 'rhythmic matrix' (to be discussed below) of *son montuno*, it is the combination of rhythms, described by Arom as a 'paradigm', that characterises the piece of music but, with less of a contrast in timbres, different pitches provide clarity (Arom 1984: 185).

Arom's analysis can help illuminate the way that individual instruments combine to form the *tumbao* and how individual musical lines are constructed and varied. In Central African wind ensembles, rhythms cross rather than coincide, again adding to clarity and, although there is some coincidence, the emphasis is on when they diverge (Arom 1991:42). In the *tumbao* there is likewise an avoidance of rhythmic duplication, with only key moments being sounded by all members of the

[19] Para el ritmo sea estable.

[20] various franjas rítmicas en continuo contraste y yuxtaposición..... Su calidad revolucionaria consiste en una estructura polirrítmica sujeta a una unidad en la cual las líneas rítmico-melódicas se entrecruzeran, se persiguen, se encuentran y se separan.

rhythm section. Arom uses the term 'implicit model' to describe the individual rhythmic ostinatos played by each horn player in which there may be slight variations but the pattern is recognisably the same (Arom 1991:141). A piano *montuno* can likewise be described in this way; while more recent salsa players have emphasised the strict repetition of piano *montunos*, there has always been room for variation within the structure.

In another analysis, Quinto Rivera (1994), in his discussion of *jibaro* (country or peasant) music in Puerto Rico, argues that the need to 'camouflage' African influences led to what he calls the 'melodization' of rhythms, which were separated from drums and recreated on melodic instruments (1994:55). Polyrhythmic combinations were established in the interplay of other instruments such as the guitar, *cuatro* (small Puerto Rican string instrument, similar to the *tres*) *guiro* and voice, thus camouflaging the internal syncopation of the rhythmic patterns. The *cuatro* provides a melodic countermelody, in which syncopated rhythms are a part of the melodic structure but are simultaneously disguised by it. This works in rhythmic counterpoint with other instruments, most notably the *guiro*.

While in Cuba there remained a great deal of prejudice against the use of hand-played drums such as the *bongó* well into the 1930s, the instrument was also a strong symbol of *son montuno* and part of the established sextet line-up (Moore 1997: 96). Thus, as a result of this continuing drum presence, Quinto Rivera's analysis has not been applied to the genre by scholars of Cuban music; the rhythmic presence is perceived to be continuing within the percussion. However, this does not mean that 'melodization' was not also taking place, specifically with the *tres* or piano *montuno*. Quinto Rivera's argument can be applied to the *tres* and piano in both the internal structure of the *montuno* in which a distinctive rhythm is combined with fixed pitches, and to its rhythmic relationship with other instruments in the ensemble in the creation of a composite rhythm. This would also fit with Nketia's theory of instrumental substitution, discussed in the introductory chapter, in which melodic instruments can substitute for percussive ones (Nketia 1980: 16).

What all these approaches provide is a way of taking the rhythmic relationships and rhythmic interlocking of the *tumbao* as the starting point for musical analysis. For León, contrasting timbres provide clarity in rhythmic relationships; for Arom, rhythmic 'models' are the basis for variation within a musical cycle; for Quinto Rivera, rhythms are hidden or camouflaged by transfer to a melodic instrument. Within the *tumbao*, the inclusion of the piano within this type of rhythmic inter-instrumental interlocking transformed the instrument's role in the 1930s and 40s and helped shape further development of the piano *montuno*.

Summary

As we have seen, *son montuno* as a genre transformed the face of Cuban popular music, as much for its approach to musical creation as its structure or instrumentation. The key to this lies in the repeated *tumbao* which serves as a basis for musical and vocal improvisation in the *montuno* section and, in which, individual instrumentalists contribute to a shared rhythmic ostinato. This type of shared ostinato can be traced to West African interlocking rhythmic structures and musical organisation but is here extended to pitched instruments such as bass, *tres* and, later, piano.

As I show in the next chapter, the internal structure of the piano *montuno* has also been

strongly influenced by the practice of interlocking, but I wish to concentrate here on the piano's role within the ensemble. In the next section I look more closely at the rhythmic relationships in the *tumbao* in order to identify how they produce a distinctive *son montuno* sound, and examine the role of the piano within this unique structure.

1.2 The Rhythmic Matrix of the *Tumbao*

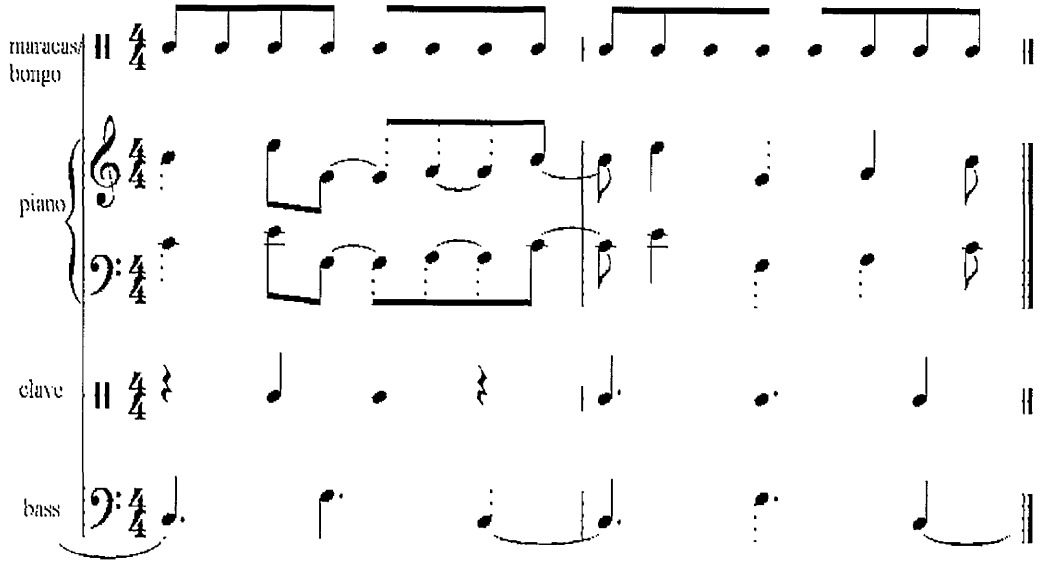
It is the rhythmic relationships between instrumentalists in the *tumbao* of the *montuno* section that typify *son montuno* and give it its unique quality. Robbins describes this as a rhythmic *matriz* or matrix - the aural impression of the rhythmic combination of instruments. He argues that this impression - sounding, according to an informant, like *taka taka taka gun* or six quavers and a crotchet - is peculiar to *son montuno* (Robbins 1990:188). This is echoed by García in the use of the phrase 'rhythmic texture' (García 2003:29). Robbins argues that by the 1930s all these specific patterns were in place and that this formed as a basis for the adaptation or incorporation of other genres (Robbins 1990:187- 188). What he does not take into account is that, by the 1930s, the two-part, asymmetrical *son clave* rhythm underpinned these rhythmic relationships. Thus, while not all of the instrumental patterns in the *tumbao* are individually affected by the *clave*, the feel of the overall rhythmic matrix corresponds to one of two halves and the impact of this will be examined in more detail later in this section.

Mauleón argues that the *tumbao* is 'supposed to appear as one rhythmical unit' and it is the overall aural effect that gives *son montuno* its particular character (Interview 18/4/2003). There is also an inbuilt flexibility in each part, giving an overall improvisatory effect. Constant repetition and variation, not only of pitch and rhythm but also more subtle changes in note placement and attack, create an inner momentum which pushes the music forward. Washburn has proposed the use of three inter-related terms to describe this phenomenon in salsa music: 'The feel encompasses what notes are chosen, how they are played and where they are placed by a musician. The groove refers to the overall effect of those choices and their interaction. Swing is achieved when a balanced tension and resolution between the feels of the musicians create momentum within the music' (Washburn 1998:161). These definitions are formulated from Washburn's own experience as a player of salsa and from conversation with other musicians; they are not universally used but are useful in helping to describe how variation can exist not only in rhythm or pitch but in much more subtle transformations.

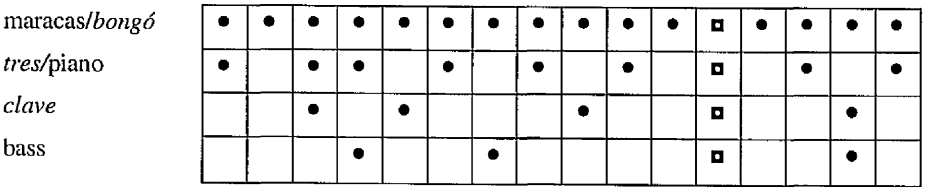
It was becoming part of this rhythmic combination that transformed the nature of piano playing within Cuban popular ensembles. Instead of providing general harmonic and melodic support, pianists were now an essential component within a shared, interlocking rhythmic structure. The following examples demonstrate the basic rhythmic relationships within the *tumbao*. Ex 1.2 shows a harmonically static piano *montuno*, of one *clave* periodicity, used by both Mauleón (1999:36) and Campos (1996:9) to illustrate the basic prototype. This particular *montuno* can be heard on piano and *tres* in recordings from the 1940s as well as being in current usage and I have added the 2:3 *son clave*, the 'anticipated' bass and a (simplified) maracas/*bongó* line. Ex 1.3 reduces these rhythms of the maracas, piano, bass and *claves* to time unit box notation to illustrate more clearly their interlocking relationship, concurrence on specific beats and differing levels of density, with each box representing a

quaver pulse. These examples represent a basic prototype of typical rhythmic relationships within the *tumbao* which I use as a basis for analysis in this section. In practice, not all elements are necessarily always present and the constant variation that is an important element of the genre means that these relationships are in a constant state of realignment.

Ex 1.2 Son Montuno Rhythmic Matrix



Ex 1.3 *Son Montuno*: Time Unit Box Notation



The four main aspects of the *tumbao* that I want to highlight here are i) the rhythmic relationships between the instruments, specifically the avoidance and concurrence of specific beats; ii) the effect of the *clave* rhythm on other instrumental patterns, whether they are 'in *clave*' or '*clave* neutral', that is whether the patterns are different on either side of the *clave* or remain unaffected by it; iii) the rhythmic density of the individual lines; iv) the constant push against the first beat of the bar by means of rhythmic anticipation.

I argue that it is the relationship between these four elements that comprises the basic rhythmic matrix and that, while the aural impression is comparatively simple, this hides a more complex construction. It is the rhythmic matrix that most clearly defines the genre, and it was the integration of the piano *montuno* into this structure in the 1930s and 40s that encouraged *conjunto*

pianists to adopt a new approach to the instrument. As well as imitation of the *tres* by means of constant arpeggiation and the avoidance of block chords, pianists started to use accentuation and deliberately placed octave doubling to stress specific beats and moments within the cycle.

Rhythmic relationships within the *tumbao*

The sharing and avoidance, between the instruments, of individual pulses in the *tumbao* creates the effect of a musical mosaic in which different rhythms, pitches and timbres work together to create the rhythmic matrix. Clarity is achieved not just by the avoidance of rhythmic clashes but by contrasting timbres and pitches. Within the matrix, certain beats are given greater weight by means of being sounded by a greater number of instruments but these do not necessarily coincide with those traditionally considered 'weak' or 'strong'. Every beat thus has its own specific instrumental combination and it is this sequence of combinations that gives the rhythmic matrix its unique quality. Arom's description of rhythmic counterpoint in Central African music highlights these different combinations: 'the combination of two or more rhythmic figure in such a way that they cross rather than coincide with one another. There are nonetheless moments when the different figures correspond, but the overall ostinato pattern that is created emphasises their points of divergence or their oppositions rather than their points of connection' (Arom 1991: 42).

Within the *tumbao* there is a hierarchy of pulses, from those sounded by all, to those in which piano, *clave* and bass are silent and the beat is played by hand percussion only. It is this constant change of instrumental combination and relative force that gives the music its momentum; as well as deliberate instrumental accentuation, different beats are automatically accented by virtue of the combination of instruments that sounds them. Much of this hierarchy comes from the influence of *rumba* (the stress on the fourth crotchet for example, played by the lowest conga in *rumba guaguancó*) and from the incorporation of the *clave* rhythm into the *tumbao*, which produces a two-bar asymmetrical rhythmic structure in which the stressed beats change from bar to bar.

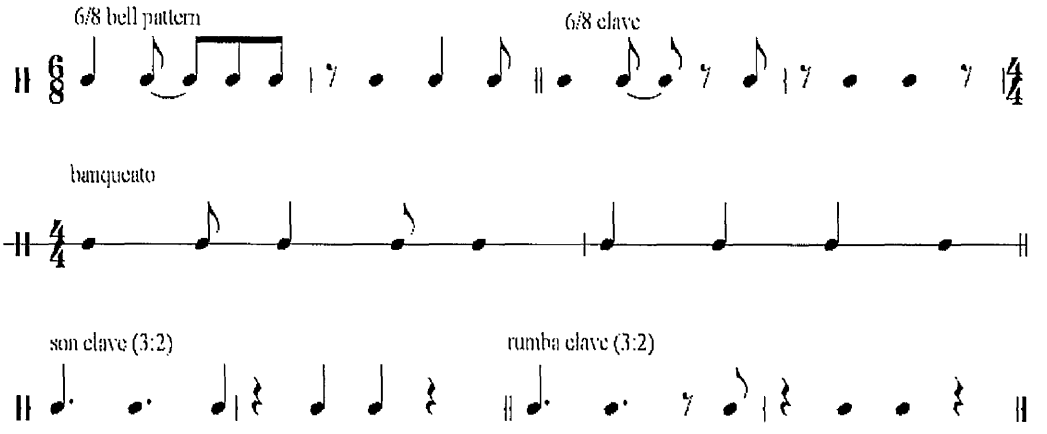
From the time box notation, we can see that the strongest beat is what is colloquially known as the *bombo* note - the fourth quaver of the 3 side of the *clave*, represented by a square symbol - as it is sounded by all four rhythmic lines, the only place where this concurrence occurs in the cycle, giving it a unique importance. This particular beat plays an important role in other styles of Cuban popular music, most notably within *rumba*, as part of the *tresillo* and *cinquillo* rhythms of *danzón* (see Chapter 3), and in being the 'kick' note in *conga*. Likewise, the comparative weakness of the first beat of the cycle, sounded by only two of the rhythmic lines, is common to much Afro-American dance music; as Browning notes with regard to Brazilian *samba*, 'it is the suspension or silencing of a beat which provokes movement' (Browning 1995:15).

Clave

It is impossible to fully understand the internal construction of the *tumbao*, and of the piano *montuno*, without an understanding of the *clave*. As Washburne puts it 'In Latin music terminology, the word *clave* refers not only to the specific rhythmic patterns but also the underlying rules that govern this organising principle' (Washbune 1997: 66) The concept of *clave* encompasses the rhythmic figures

themselves - *son clave*, *rumba clave*, 6/8 *clave* (found in *rumba columbia* and the *batá* drums of *santería*) and the *banqueato* rhythm in *danzón* (covered in more detail in Chapter 3) which 'functions like a *clave*' (Mauleón 1993:51) - as well as the relationship between the two halves, and way in which these patterns dictate the rhythmic relationships of other members of the ensemble. Beyond the specific rhythms of *clave,* all function as 'generative structures underlying the entire composite rhythm of the two-bar ostinatos' (Manuel 1998: 129) and 'provide a rhythmic formula that serves as the foundation for the performance' (Washburne 1998: 163). Example 1.4 shows the most common *clave* rhythms; I have notated the *banqueato,* in 4/4 for ease of comparison.

Ex 1.4 Clave Patterns



The evolution of the various *clave* rhythms from African timelines to the Cuban *clave*, and the effect of the binarisation of ternary African rhythms have been documented by few scholars (eg Pérez Fernández 1987). The timeline, a two part asymmetrical rhythm usually played on a metal bell, orientates musicians within complex rhythmic structures and, like the *clave*, is not always heard (Agawu 2003: 73). Both Stone (2005:84) and Temperley (2000: 80-81) note parallels between the structure of the timeline and the hemiola, the horizontal alternation of two against three, which is found in much Iberian music as well as in *punto guajiro* in Cuba. This might help to explain why the asymmetry of the pattern, as well as playing this orientation role, was transformed into opposing rhythmic 'feels' which dictate, rather than simply reflect, the rhythms of the other players in *son montuno.*

It is however important to stress that this takes place over a regular underlying beat. With reference to timelines, Agawu maintains that it is grouping structure rather than metrical structure that is uneven; in other word there remains a fixed metrical background to timelines and he notes that 'the background provides the condition of possibility for the timeline' (Agawu 2003: 78). The *clave* in *son montuno* likewise dictates internal rhythmic relationships against the background of a strong and regular pulse.

For the purpose here, *clave* means the *son clave* unless stated otherwise. Although often

described as one rhythmic pattern, it is a composite of 'two rhythmic figures in a relationship of tension relaxation' and it is the relationship between the two that provides much of the momentum for the music (Mauleón 1993: 47). The pattern can be played in either direction, ie starting with either the three side or the two side, and is played without a break for the entire piece. To reverse the *clave* direction, an uneven phrase length is needed as the pattern itself is played continuously; many songs have a *largo* in one direction and the *montuno* in the other, 3:2 to 2:3 being the most common. Although traditionally played on the *claves* in sextet style *son montuno*, the pattern can appear on other percussion instruments or not be physically played at all; it remains a fundamental part of the music even if not heard and is implied in the rhythmic composite of the other instruments (Manuel 1985:253, Washburne 1998: 162).

The *clave* affects the overall feel of the rhythmic matrix, even if not all instruments are 'in *clave*', as its different periodicity, every two bars, contrasts with the one bar periodicity of a *clave*-neutral rhythm. The anticipated bass for example, is *clave*-neutral as it is identical on both sides of the *clave*; however, the fourth quaver beat, although played by the bass on both sides, is stressed by other instruments only every *clave* as the *bombo*. While an individual instrument may play the same rhythm on both sides, its effect can be very different on either side of the *clave* due to the different periodicity of the other instruments.

The two sides of the *clave* have been described as '*fuerte*' (3 side, strong) and as '*debil*' (2 side, weak) (Mauleón 1993: 51). However, this description does not so well describe the rhythmic stresses of the piano *montuno* which, as the only other rhythmic pattern in the *tumbao* that is not *clave*-neutral, often functions as a counter-rhythm to the *clave*. The piano typically sounds the downbeat on the two side of the clave (as the *claves* do on the three side) and there is a rhythmic counterweight to the weaker side of the clave in the lower level of piano syncopation in that bar. The UK-based Latin pianist Roland Perrin has described the piano *montuno* as being a bar of (mainly) on-beats (the 2 side) and a bar of off-beats (the 3 side), adding that playing it is like 'flying and landing', with the flying being the constant off beat accentuation that finally 'lands' at the beginning of the two side of the clave (Interview 23/9/04). In this sense, like the congas in *rumba guaguancó*, the piano *montuno* functions in a relationship of call and response with the *clave;* the sounding of the first beat of the bar alternates between piano and *clave* and the rhythmic feels mirror each other.

Rhythmic Density within Instrumental Relationships

While some rhythmic relationships in *son montuno* have been analysed in relation to *rumba*, for example Manuel's description of the anticipated bass as a synthesis of the *clave* rhythm and the lower congas in *rumba* (Manuel 1985: 252-253), this has not been applied to the piano and how the piano (or *tres*) *montuno* could have a parallels within *rumba*'s rhythmic hierarchy. Nketia's work on rhythmic density in drum ensembles has relevance here for both genres, revealing fundamental parallels between them, and, given the importance of *rumba* in the development of *son montuno*, I examine both genres here. In Nketia's analysis, shared rhythmic patterns can be reduced to different levels of density, in a process of grading. The analysis also reveals to what extent, if at all, the addition of tuned pitch changes closely related rhythmic relationships and shows how the piano/*tres montuno* fits within a

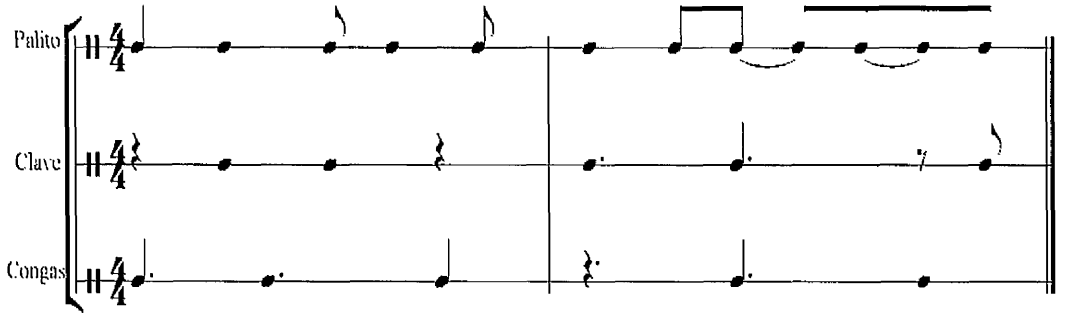
rhythmic hierarchy.

As I will explore further in the next chapter, much of what are considered basic elements of the *tumbao,* such as *clave* and anticipated bass, were not present in the earliest forms of *son montuno* and were gradually incorporated under the influence of *rumba* (Manuel 1985: 259). The structural principles of *son montuno* thus have many parallels with those of *rumba,* but with considerable extensions in pitch and timbre due to the presence in the ensemble of pitched instruments, absent in *rumba.* These are as much a part of the rhythmic structure as the percussion instruments, echoing roles held by those instruments in *rumba.* Manuel argues that *rumba* was the main source for the structure of the *son*'s *montuno* section, with its call and response, semi-improvised vocal calls, a composite rhythmic ostinato and constant improvisation from the *quinto*, the highest pitched drum (Manuel 1998: 129-130). Sublette even argues that Havana *son* could be called *son rumbeado*, such is the strength of its influence. (Sublette 2004: 335).

Nketia argues that in many African percussive musical forms, 'rhythms must be graded in density or complexity in relation to the role of each part as accompanying, response or lead instrument', and sets out three graded levels (Nketia 1974; 133). Examination and comparison of both *rumba* and *son montuno* in this way can further illuminate the role of the piano within the *tumbao.*

For a *rumba* ensemble, three graded rhythmic levels are already present in the three conga drums (paralleling West African drum ensembles, but with the pitches reversed in that the highest drum is the freest and most improvisatory). However, it its worth extending the analogy of grading to include the more fixed rhythmic relationships within the ensemble. By this I mean the two lower tuned congas, which, although involved in some improvisation, have relatively fixed open tones on specific beats, and the hand percussion. The following example shows the basic rhythmic structure of *rumba guaguanco* - congas, *clave* and *palito* (stick pattern). The *clave* is 2:3 to make comparison easier with the *son montuno* example.

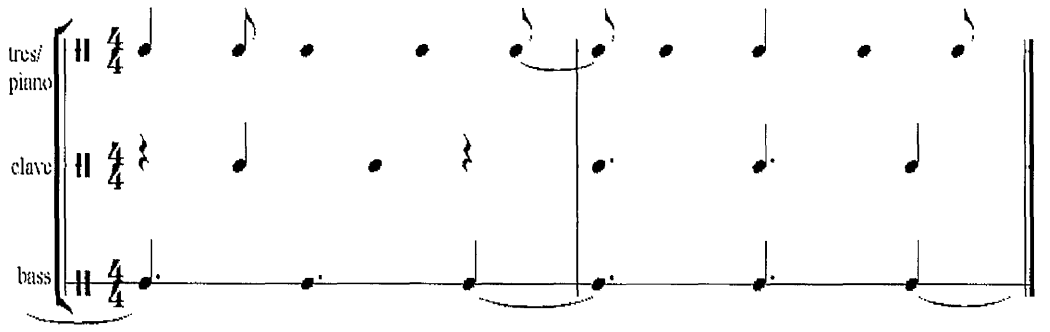
Ex 1.5 Rumba guaguanco rhythms



The lowest, least rhythmically dense level represents an amalgamation of the rhythms of the two supporting congas - the four open tones on two pitches and the '*bombo*' note played as a bass note by the higher of the two drums on the fourth quaver of the 3 side of the *clave.* As we have seen, the

bombo is the most important rhythmic point in the cycle, being the only place where all three rhythmic lines coincide in both *rumba* and *son montuno*. The (*rumba*) *clave* represents the next level of complexity followed by the *palito* pattern. The palito rhythm, also known as *cascara* (shell) as it can be played with a stick on the side of a conga or timbales, is related to the *clave* as it sounds all of the *clave* beats, but has a greater density, and is considered the rhythmic driving force behind the music. It is normally played on the *catá,* a log hit with two sticks, and is colloquially known as the *guagua,* or bus, due to its driving quality.

Ex 1.6 Son Montuno Rhythms



The *son montuno* example (1.6) shows anticipated bass, *clave* and a characteristic *tres* or piano *montuno* rhythm (reduced here to rhythm without pitch) and the three graded levels can also be clearly seen. The notes in the (anticipated) bass line correspond very closely to the rhythmic construction of the two supporting congas in *rumba* and the *clave* again represents the next level. It is the rhythmic concordance between the piano/*tres montuno* and the *palito* pattern that reveals the parallels between them. The *montuno* has the highest rhythmic density within these three rhythmic levels and thus has the role of driving the rhythm in the same way as the *palito*. While its rhythm in this example is, like the *palito* pattern, related to the *clave* it is more independent; the *palito* pattern includes all the *clave* beats while the *montuno* coincides with the *clave* only on the *bombo* and on the second beat of the two side. *Montuno* and *palito* correspond in density and complexity but the *montuno* retains a higher level of syncopation and pushes against the beat more consistently, though this has been tempered by the two part rhythmic structure of the *clave* and by the demands of a more complex shared rhythmic matrix.

Anticipation

Rhythmic anticipation has a wider usage than the anticipated bass alone, though this is its clearest manifestation. The anticipated bass is created by the tying of the final crotchet of each bar to the beginning of the next; this avoidance of the first beat pushes the music rhythmically forward, temporarily destabilising the rhythmic structure. At the same time, harmonic anticipation frequently

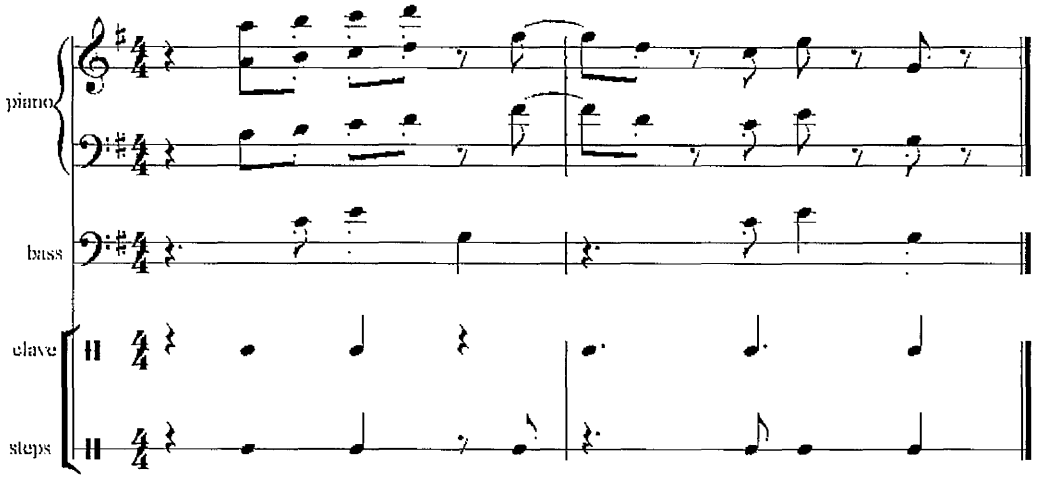
pushes the music harmonically into the next bar, again creating a temporary disorientation. It has been described as 'perhaps the single most distinctive feature of Afro-Cuban popular music' though its importance has perhaps been overstated - based more on its later importance in salsa (Manuel 1985: 249). As I show in later chapters, it was rarely present in sextets and septets from the 1920s, and was still not a consistent feature of *conjunto* style in the 1940s and early 50s, with its use varying considerably between ensembles.

The use of anticipation is part of a wider practice of what García calls *contratiempo,* the relentless accentuation of offbeats to give the music a quality of pushing forward (García 2003: 141). This tendency is found informally in rural *changüí* (the most prominent early from of *son montuno*) and was further refined in the work of Arsenio Rodríguez in the 1940s and 50s (Lapidus 2005: 67).

The *tumbao* has two levels of anticipation: that of crotchet and quaver, and the combination of these further destabilises the beat. Manuel calls this the 'staggered anticipation of the typical piano ostinato as it reaches the chord of the second bar half a beat before the arrival of that bar' (Manuel 1985: 255). Temperley argues that in the context of much Western popular music, notes that are accented just before the beat 'belong' to the following strong beat in the mind of the listener and, rather than cause conflict, are reinforcing the prevailing metre (Temperley 2000: 82-83). However, in this instance, with the bass line anticipating the first beat of each bar by a crotchet but the piano, with its constant syncopation remaining a quaver behind, the combination creates a further disorientation. As I showed in Ex 1.2 (the rhythmic matrix), this staggered anticipation is more common on the two side of the *clave*, in contrast to *rumba,* in which the crotchet of the *tumbadora* is followed by the quaver of the (*rumba*) *clave* on the three side only.

García's analysis of the dance steps that developed with 1940s *son montuno* (and still used today) shows the further importance of this double anticipation. The dance steps form part of the overall rhythmic matrix; as well as covering all the *clave* beats, the steps anticipate with a crotchet on the 3 side and a quaver on the 2 side, coinciding with either the piano or the bass (though, as García points out, Arsenio Rodríguez's bass parts moved far from standard crotchet anticipation in his development of *contratiempo* and could be considerably more complex) (García 2003: 143). García's transcription of *No Toque el Guao* (recorded by Arsenio in 1948) shows how the piano *montuno* could sound all the dance steps with in a two bar phrase; in this instance staggered anticipation on the two side is followed by a rhythmic unison between piano and bass to coincide with the steps (García 2003:149).

Ex 1.7 No Toque El Guao (1948)



The final crotchet of a bar can be known colloquially in salsa as the *ponche*; the term is most commonly used when it is accented by all instruments, often as part of a break (Mauleón 1993:63). In this instance, the pianist suspends the staggered anticipation in order to contribute to a stronger shared accent on the fourth crotchet (as in the above example) which can anticipate harmonically as well as rhythmically. In coming together on the final beat in this way, *soneros* are echoing the West African musical practice of putting the most important or strongest beat at the end, rather than beginning of a musical phrase (Chernoff 1979:56, Temperley 2000: 90). The regular matrix is temporarily suspended in order to create a specific musical effect, a shared anticipation which further disorientates the listener. As this more commonly occurs on the 3 side of the *clave*, it also again highlights, and is highlighted by, both the *clave* and the dance steps.

Summary

The way that the rhythmic matrix is constructed has had a direct bearing on individual instrumental lines and, while within each cycle there is a great deal of flexibility, both rhythmic and melodic, the matrix dictates basic and fixed rhythmic relationships. These relationships derive from i) the avoidance of coinciding on certain beats and the deliberate sounding together on others; ii) the regular pull between the two different sides, and feels, of the *clave;* iii) the grading of rhythmic lines according to density; iv) the driving forward of the music using staggered anticipation. All of these four elements have a direct bearing on the role of the piano within the ensemble: pianists interlock rhythmically with the other members of the *tumbao*; the piano *montuno* works as a counterweight and rhythmic reply to the *clave*; the *montuno* represents a level of rhythmic grading of greater density than that of bass and *clave;* pianists drive the music forward by means of anticipation and constant syncopation As I have shown, all these rhythmic elements within the matrix were strongly influenced by *rumba* and its internal rhythmic construction.

As I show in the next chapter, the *tres montuno* was, during the 1910s and 1920s, transformed under the influence of *rumba*, from a syncopated, but rhythmically loose combination of arpeggiation and melodic imitation, into a more specifically accented part of the matrix. This can be seen as another

instance of functional substitution, this time taking elements of the *catá* percission to the *tres*. In imitating the *tres montuno*, *conjunto* pianists took this a step further, maintaining its role within the rhythmic matrix while further strengthening it through clearer and more accurate accentuation. From this imitation of the *tres* combined with influence from other genres, a distinctive piano *montuno* emerged.

Conclusion

The role of the piano that developed in *son montuno* follows an entirely different set of rules from the way the instrument had been used in popular genres before the emergence of the *conjunto*. This role emerged from the specific demands of *son montuno* as a genre and the different, more open-ended and performance-based approach to musical creation that it encompassed. It also developed out of imitation of the role of the *tres* in previous ensembles, especially in the use of arpeggiated harmony as a way of avoiding block chords. Cyclical repetition of an ostinato, and the responsibility of being part of an overall rhythmic combination of instruments, were part of a new piano function, what Morales calls 'the submission of the musicians to rhythmic imperatives' (Morales 2003:3). The influence of *rumba* had further refined the rhythmic matrix into a more fixed set of relationships by the time that pianists became a fixture in the *conjunto* and these relationships were to remain a key part of the *tumbao* even within later, jazz-influenced harmonic transformation.

Rather than trying to recreate popular music on the piano by the use of specific rhythms within an established musical context, as salon and concert composers were doing (see Chapter 3), *conjunto* pianists were playing their instrument in an entirely new way. They modified the existing technique of the instrument to accommodate a different type of musical process and the piano, like the *tres* before it, was incorporated into the rhythmic matrix as equal partner of bass and percussion, rather than in a different role, as is suggested by the common 'African rhythm and European melody' view of *son montuno*. The open-ended nature of the *montuno* section and the scope for individual variation within the shared ostinato meant that the way a pianist approached playing *son montuno* was more important than the exact notes played, and virtuosity had to be matched by versatility.

The development of the piano *montuno* within the *tumbao* was not the only distinctive feature of *conjunto* piano style. As I show in later chapters, pianists were influenced by other popular genres - in, for example, the structuring of instrumental solos or freer extemporisation within verse sections. The piano *montuno*, and its rhythmic relationship with the rest of the *tumbao*, represents however, a shift in emphasis that changed the nature of piano playing within Cuba and in the wider world of Latin music.

Chapter 2 Before the *conjunto* piano: a wider perspective on the musical origins of the *tres* and the early development of *son montuno*

It is impossible to study the role of the piano in the *conjunto* without taking into consideration the part played by imitation of the *tres* in its development, and for this reason I will concentrate in this chapter on the emergence of a distinctive style of *tres* playing in *son montuno.* The established view of *son montuno* is that it was the first distinctly Cuban genre, emerging in Eastern Cuba from the meeting of generic Spanish and African styles (eg Orovio 1981:455, Manuel 1995:36). However, as I discussed in the introduction, for social and historical reasons, specific musical elements have come to be seen as either of African or European origin in a binary division of Cuban culture. In terms of instrumentation, *son montuno* is popularly perceived to be a mixture of 'Spanish guitars' and 'African percussion'. This simplification ignores both the novelty of native Cuban instruments such as the *bongó* and the *tres*, and the new functions and playing styles in evidence. In viewing *son montuno* as an equal synthesis of European and African elements, there is a danger in equating these musical elements with instrumental provenance.

The *tres* was the first melodic/harmonic instrument in the *son* ensemble and, as such, was a key element in the development of a distinctive *son montuno* style. Although this is acknowledged by scholars (eg Linares 1974:110, Sublette 2004: 338), very little has been written on the instrument itself and, as I shall show, there is confusion and disagreement over its origins. Moreover, literature on the *tres* stresses its European heritage as a part of the guitar family and concentrates on design (eg León 1974: 127, Evora 2003:44). This has discouraged any discussion of African models for *tres* technique and function.

As Seeger notes, the presence of people of different origins in Latin America has naturally led to a related musical classification: 'Musical instruments are sometimes identified with the communities in which they originated: rattles and flutes with Amerindians; percussive instruments, musical bows and *xekeres* with Africans; and stringed and brass instruments with Europeans' (Seeger 2000: 73). This consolidates a descriptive rather than analytical approach, based on design and perceived origin rather than function. As I mentioned in the introduction, however, writers such as Gilroy (1993) and Floyd (1995) see the presence of deeper and more abstract musical structures, rather than physical recreations of instruments, as the key to the continuation of African musical practice in the Americas. Likewise, referring to colonial West Africa, Agawu downplays the importance of European instruments in African musical development: 'the material presence of European instruments is ultimately of limited significance. More important and yet more elusive is the transformation of the musical language itself' (Agawu 2003: 6).

Echoing Nketia's identification (1980) of instrumental substitution as a musical approach found strongly in both Africa and the Americas, Pacini Hernández writes: 'The evolution of Spanish-American popular music has been characterised by incrementation and substitution'. (2000: 101). In other words, new instrumental formats or types of arrangement can be added or substituted into a musical system with little or no modification to its essential structure. Likewise, an approach to playing

a specific instrument found in one style of music can be adapted to new musical situations and instruments.

While acknowledging similarities between the design of the *tres* and the European guitar family, it is necessary to look beyond these to deeper musical structures; to define the *tres* as an instrument of European origin ignores the potential application of musical structures and techniques taken from a wider sphere of influence. By contrast, examining the development of a distinctive *tres* style from a perspective that brings in African as well as European precedents brings a new dimension to the study of the piano *montuno* and illuminates why imitation of the *tres* by *conjunto* pianists was such a radical departure from existing piano technique.

The importance of the role of the *tres* in the development of the *conjunto* piano cannot be overstated. The function of the piano in the cyclical *montuno* section of *son montuno* was most strongly affected by the *tres*, both from its role as the sole melodic and harmonic provider in early styles of *son*, and as one part of the shared rhythmic structure of the *tumbao*. The piano was thus integrated into a structure that remained essentially unchanged, and it was pianists who had to adapt to the new musical situation, using imitation of the *tres* as a key technique.

In the first section of this chapter, I examine in greater detail why the binary cultural paradigm has been so strong in the field of Cuban music, and how in particular it has affected scholarly views of string instruments, such as the *tres*. I then examine specific musical features of *changüí*, the most prominent early form of *son montuno*, in order to reassess the accepted origins of the *tres* style, and more specifically the *tres montuno*, the repeated plucked ostinato played by the *tresero* (*tres* player) in the *montuno* section.

In the second part of the chapter, drawing on the work of Kubik in relation to the North American Blues and its possible origins in Africa (1999), I argue that early forms of *son montuno* such as *changüi* have parallels with West African solo self-accompanied song, and that the plucked, interlocking *tres* technique, and its movement between melody and arpeggiated harmony, owes as much to African chordophone styles as to Spanish guitar technique. This has been overlooked in the literature due to the assumption that the *tres* was a variant of European guitar and was continuing with a largely European playing technique. I analyse an example of *changüí* to highlight musical and stylistic similarities between the role of the *tres* and West African chordophone accompaniments. Potential African antecedents for *tres* technique help to provide a through line from African musical principles to the *conjunto* piano that goes beyond the inclusion of the instrument in shared Afro-Cuban rhythmic structures.

Finally, I examine the role of the *tres* in the sextets and septets of the 1910s and 20s, using my own transcriptions from recordings made by the most important ensembles during that period. In particular I analyse the role of the *clave* rhythmic pattern in modifying rhythmic relationships within the structure of *son montuno,* and the evolution of the *tres montuno* from an essentially melodic structure, which followed the vocal melody closely, to an ostinato which combined melody and counter-melody in a more integrated structure.

2.1 The location of the *tres* within the binary paradigm

Grenet describes Cuban music in general as a mix of Spanish melody and African percussion: 'The deep melody of mystic Castille and the Yoruba rhythm, full of savage mystery, like the voice of hidden natural powers' (Grenet 1995:44).[21] While this statement might appear overly dramatic, it sums up the attitude of many scholars to Cuban music, an attitude that has manifested itself most clearly in the division between 'European' and 'African' musical instruments.

The Cuban composer and guitarist Efraín Amador argues that 'Cuban string instruments always have a European ancestry' (quoted in Mendez/Pérez 1992, Anexo 9:2). Manuel maintains that Afro-Cuban elements in *son montuno* are clearest in the use of certain instruments, such as *clave, marímbula* and *bongó*, and highlights stringed instruments and a *bel canto* singing style as European. He writes 'In the early *son,* the European features were somewhat more prominent as is reflected in the predominance of string instruments (guitars and the guitar-like *tres*)' (Manuel 1995:36). Evora stresses the Canarian/Andalucian origins of *son montuno*, again by virtue of plucked string instruments (Evora 1997:b 42). Linares considers that plucked strings are the most important Spanish cultural element in Cuban music, and although Mauleón credits African cultures in the Caribbean in general with the creation of musical instruments 'both percussive and melodic', she describes *son montuno* as combining 'Spanish lyricism and string instruments with African-derived instruments and African rhythms and harmonies' (Linares 1974: 18; Mauleón 1993:2, 177). With regard to the *tres* itself, scholars are more concerned with its physical appearance than its plucked playing technique. Díaz Ayala considers it a smaller version of the guitar' (Díaz Ayala 2000:1). Robbins describes it as a 'guitar like instrument' (1990: 184) while Ledón Sánchez considers it a 'modification of the guitar' (2003: 77).

It is the plucked playing style of the *tres* that sets it apart. Although plucked Spanish lutes such as the *laúd* (played with a plectrum) and *vilhela* (plucked with the fingers) were popular amongst the Spanish upper classes in the very early colonial period, and indeed the *vilhuela,* like the *tres,* featured strings tuned in pairs, these instruments were never popular outside Spain and thus never became associated with Cuban musical development (Sublette 2004: 79). The construction of the *tres montuno* in *son montuno* is also very different from the type of plucked *tres* playing featured in styles such as *punto guajiro* in which there is a clear separation between plucked melodic interludes and strummed harmonic playing (Orovio 2004: 171). Sublette is one of the few to acknowledge the African contribution, in describing the *tres* as an 'adaptation, by Africans, of the *bandurria*'[22]. He also makes the connection between the melodic interlocking of the plucked *tres* (and piano) and the melodic interlocking in the Central African *sanza* (lamellaphone) tradition (Sublette 2004: 336-337).

The assumption that string (and melodic) instruments in Cuba can only be of European extraction has its origin in the nature of Cuban musical research and has a counterpart in attitudes to African and Afro-Cuban music: In *La Música en Cuba,* first published in 1946, Alejo Carpentier maintains that Afro-Cuban music 'dispenses with any melody-making instruments, pure singing over

[21] La profunda melodía de la mística Castilla y el ritmo Yoruba preñado de selváticos misteriosos, como la voz de los ocultos poderes de la naturaleza.
[22] A 12-string plucked string instrument of Spanish origin and used in *punto guajiro.*

percussion' (2001:264). This is echoed by the jazz pianist Roberto Carcasses when he says 'There is no harmony from Africa...harmony remains European, from European music' (Interview 6/8/02).[23] This type of unthinking categorisation is not confined to Cuba. It has parallels in studies of jazz where music is frequently described as a mix of European harmonies and African rhythm (see Washburne 1997:59). There is also a historical parallel with the treatment of African music by European travellers and academics. Agawu maintains that an obsession with drums and percussion, together with assumptions about African rhythmic prowess in both colonial accounts and later ethnographic studies, has meant that 'African rhythm' amounts to an 'invention', similar to others identified by post-colonial theorists (Agawu 2003: 55-58, 61-62).

The scholarly emphasis in Cuba on organology as the key to musical styles has polarised 'Spanish' and 'African' elements in *son montuno* and ignored the different, often new roles of individual instruments. The twin emblems of *son montuno* - the *tres* and *bongó* - are both native Cuban instruments but have been used as symbols of European and African influences. The ethnomusicological writings of Fernando Ortiz, and his vision of a country influenced by the equal but contrasting industries of tobacco and sugar, reflect the tendency towards the division of Cuban culture into binary opposites.

Social and historical factors in Cuban musical development

In *Los Instrumentos de la Música AfroCubana,* first published in 1952, although categorising the *tres* as a Hispanic string instrument, Ortiz briefly acknowledges the presence of chordophones of African origin in the Caribbean. The majority he cites are of *bantu* origin, such as the *sambi* (one stringed plucked harp) or *burumbumba* (a one stringed bowed instrument resembling the Brazilian *berimbau* and either plucked or struck with a stick). He also mentions the *sorón*, of *Mandinga* origin, a harp of fifteen strings on two levels and a bridge which he assumes must have arrived in the Antilles with the slave ships, although he never personally saw an example of this instrument (Ortiz 1952 vol 2: 313, 289-301).

Ortiz's acknowledgement of the presence of African string instruments in Cuba is, however, an isolated case, and the majority of writers continue to categorise string instruments as European. However, this confusion is understandable given the economic history of the island and the social situation in which Afro-Cubans created and re-created their music. According to Kubik, cultural retention depends less on numbers and direct lineage than on social factors, and does not necessarily relate to the ethnicity of individual musicians but to what becomes the dominant 'style cluster' (Kubik 1999: 97-99). By this he means a selection of musical traits that, even temporarily, exert a stronger influence within a group, due to extra-musical factors. The continuance of Afro-Cuban drumming-based traditions in Cuba relates more to social and geographical factors than cultural ones or to the specific ethnicity of participants, but it has affected the popular view of what are considered African elements in popular Cuban music.

The colonial economy, especially in the Western part of the island, relied on mass black slave labour in the sugar plantations, and communal living conditions were instrumental in conserving

[23] De Africa no hay armonía ....la armonía se queda de Europa, de la música de Europa.

cultural forms. The 19th century saw a large influx of Yoruba arrivals, comparatively late in the Slave Trade, and these further reinforced African traditions (Alén 2000:117). The survival of Afro-Cuban musical styles, in particular religious music, has also been attributed to the importance of *cabildos,* religious brotherhoods encouraged by the colonial government and set up along ethnic lines in an attempt to avoid pan-ethnic resistance. Operating as mutual aid organisations for free Blacks, with internal election of officials, *cabildos* were also instrumental in conserving African cultural traditions from religious rites to carnival, to the extent of prohibiting the playing of rhythms from the traditions of other African ethnic groups (Urfé 1984:171, Brandon 1993:71). Although ethnicity was very loosely defined by the authorities, usually dependent on a slave's port of embarkation from Africa, religious ceremonies for the *Lucumí, Congo, Arará* and *Abakuá* continued to flourish under the guise of celebrating Catholic saints days (Vélez 2000: 8-9). Musical structures were recreated within a ritual context, benefiting both members of the *cabildo* and the ruling classes (Wa Mukuna 1994: 406).

With no European equivalent which could serve the same purpose, Afro-Cubans in colonial Cuba, slave and free, had to find ways of rebuilding their drums and percussion instruments. There is, therefore, a clearer line in the continuance and development of these African musical traditions and the strength of *cabildos* has meant that, starting with Ortiz, percussion-based ritual music has received the most attention from scholars. The accepted path for the continuance of Afro-Cuban traditions has been from religious ritual to secular percussive ensemble music (*rumba, conga de comparsa*) with Cuban forms such as *son montuno* emerging from the meeting of these traditions with Hispanic, guitar-based song forms.

The existence of the European guitar family meant that string instruments developed in the New World would always be seen as variants of European instruments such as the guitar. However, there is evidence that Afro-Cubans showed a strong interest and familiarity with the *tres*. The Cuban composer Eduardo Sánchez de Fuentes wrote in 1927 that 'the *tres* ...seems to be an important musical element for Africans' (quoted in Ortiz 1952 Vol 2: 313).[24] Moreover, early versions of the *tres* were constructed from wooden boxes and fishing line, in the creation of a new smaller plucked string instrument, rather than in the imitation of a guitar (Orovio 2004:214).

However, whether the *tres* began as a recreation of an African instrument or as an adaptation of a European one, it is in the playing style, rather than the physical design, that musical origins can be deduced. As Charry points out with reference to Mande music, playing styles rather than instruments can be the key to a particular African genre; for example, both guitars and traditional instruments can be used for either traditional or modern genres, and playing techniques from many different families of instruments have been translated to the guitar (Charry 2000:24). In other words, the divisions between styles are not strict, and a substitute instrument with sufficient resembling features can often be adapted to existing musical styles (see also Nketia 1980). In the same way, Kubik argues that a European violin, described in the 17th century Virginian county records, is also a 'conceptual extension' of the Hausa *goge*, or one-string fiddle, translated to the New World (Kubik 1999: 11).

In the next section of this chapter I argue that far from being European song with added African percussion, *son montuno* can also be seen as part of an African tradition of self-accompanied

[24] El *tres*.... aparece en manos de los Africanos como elemento musical de importancia.

sung storytelling. More specifically, the function and technique of the *tres* can be more closely linked with plucked West African chordophones than with the Spanish guitar. The adaptation of African musical structures and playing techniques to the *tres*, a musical instrument of seeming European origin, would become the basis of the *tres*, and later piano *montuno* in *son montuno*.

2.2 Early styles of *son montuno* and the role of the *tres*

Some writers still cling to the Cuban myth of tracing *son montuno* back to the 16th century with *Son de la Ma' Teodora* (allegedly the very first *son*) and mentioned by many scholars (eg Steward 1999:24; Carpertier 2001:84-87) but refuted by others (Alén 1998:60-61; Roy 1998: 115-116). *Son montuno* should rather be seen as one of a number of regional Latin American genres, such as *samba* in Brazil and *tango* in Argentina, emerging in post-plantation, post-colonial and/or rapidly urbanising economies in the late 19th century. Later co-opted by governments to promote a greater sense of nationalism, these new genres emerged during periods of social upheaval. Major political and social events in Cuba, such as the abolition of slavery (1886), republican wars (1868-78, 1895-1898), agricultural migration, the movement of the Army, and urbanisation, also help to explain the rapid dispersal and development of musical styles in a pre-mass media age (Roy 1998:123; Moore 1997:92-93).

Son montuno originally emerged in the Eastern part of the island as a working-class music, played by musically illiterate instrumentalists and singers, but by the late 1920s it had a popularity and impact in all of Cuba, unmatched by other popular styles such as Cuban jazz and *danzón*. It has been described as a part of a complex in the sheer number of variants and hybrid forms which exist on the island. The CIDMUC *Instrumentos de la Música Folklórico-Popular de Cuba Atlas* is an ethnomusicologial study which details classes of instruments, types of ensembles and geographical location. It has found 66 variants of *son montuno,* compared with, for example, 7 for *rumba* and 20 for *conga de comparsa,* making *son* the most heterogeneous genre on the island (CIDMUC 2002:557).

Three styles - *changüí, nengón* and *kiribá* - have been cited as very early variants of *son montuno*. All three are from Guantanamó province, with *changüí* being the best known, and all are still performed. Orovio describes *changüí* as one of the oldest in the *son* complex while Lapidus and Alén name *kiribá* and *nengón* as antecedents of *changüí* itself (Orovio 2004:51, Lapidus 2005: 63; Alén 1998:63). Neither *nengón* nor *kiribá* have a *largo* (verse) section, which, according to Alén was added under European influence when *son,* as a genre, moved beyond its rural heartland, and this would also place *changüí,* with its two-part structure, later than the other two variants (Alén 1998: 68).

Lapidus cautions against the organological approach which automatically places *changüí* as an antecedent of *son montuno* due to its instrumentation, without reference to distinctive features. He maintains that the idea of a *son* complex is slightly misplaced, and that *changüí* overlaps with other genres apart from *son montuno*, such as *punto guajiro*, *rumba* and especially the Cuban-Haitian *tumba francesa* (Lapidus 2005:49, 70). Nevertheless, in another paper he cites a number of elements that link *changüí* with *son montuno* among them: instrumentation; the rhythm of the *marímbula* which he sees as being reproduced in the fourth crotchet emphasis of the conga drum of the later *conjunto* (though the

marímbula bass line also includes the final quaver); and the distinctive way of playing the *bongó*, with free improvisation and the extended use of glissando (Lapidus 2004: 242-243).

The early history of the *tres* in *son montuno* has been the subject of some debate, with suggestions that the instrument was not always plucked or that the guitar predated it in the *son* ensemble. Although Steward maintains that both instruments were strummed and that the plucked *tres* style did not emerge till the 1920s in Havana, both Orovio and Amador mention the use of a plectrum and Alén defines the *tres* as a plucked instrument (Steward 1999:25; Orovio 1981:481; Amador 1997:30-33; Alén 2000:124). Manuel places the Cuban *laud,* a lute of Spanish and Arabic origin, as a companion to the *tres* and guitar, all present in the early ensembles, but Mauleón and Roy suggest that the *tres* was the original instrument with the guitar joining later, under the influence of *trova* (Manuel 1988; 30; Mauleón 1999:31; Roy 2002:120).

According to Roy, the traditional *changüí* ensemble consisted of *tres, marimbula* (or *botija*) *bongó* amd *guayo* (a metal scraper related to the *guiro)* with both the guitar and *claves* not yet present (Roy 2002:118-120). Two or more of the instrumentalists would also sing (Lapidus 2005: 52). Contemporary groups such as Changüí de Guantanamó follow this instrumentation; and if we accept that *changüí* is one of the oldest surviving styles of *son montuno* then the *tres* would seem to be the precursor to the guitar in the ensemble

In *changüí,* with no guitar to provide strummed chords, the *tres* player alone creates the harmonic element of a song, using a constant flow of notes rather than block chords. In the *largo* section, the *tresero* might follow the vocal line in parallel thirds or unison, switching to arpeggiated chords in between phrases to reinforce the harmonic centre; in the *montuno* section, they use this same arpeggiated technique in a cyclical harmonic structure, following the outline of the melody, to create a *tres montuno.* The combination of interlocking arpeggiation and melodic doubling creates a sense of horizontal harmony that compensates for the lack of an instrument with a chordal harmonic role. Before the emergence of *son montuno* in Havana, this was a unique feature of *changüí* that was not present in other contemporary genres, such as *punto guajiro,* in which the *tres* was also present.

The absence of *clave* in *changüí*

The absence of *clave* in *changüí* suggests more than the absence of a specific rhythm or instrument. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the *clave* is one of the key features in Afro-Cuban genres, both religious and secular. Whether in its ternary form, found in religious music and based on a frequently used African timeline, or in the binarised version found in *son* and *rumba claves*, the pattern governs the rhythmic accents of the entire ensemble and, in *son montuno,* can affect the rhythmic shape of the *tres* or piano *montuno.*

However, within all these early styles - *changüí, nengón* and *kiribá*- not only are the *clave* rhythm and the *claves* absent, but the *tres montuno* and melodic rhythms are *clave*-neutral, ie not influenced by the pull of a *clave* rhythm. In other words there is no *implied* clave, or even an alternative rhythm functioning as the *clave*, which governs the rhythmic direction of the ostinato, as is found for example in the *banqueato* rhythm of *danzón* (see Chapter 3). The musical principle of an in-built rhythmic tension and release, present in two very different genres, *rumba* and *danzón,* is absent. This

reflected in the footwork of the dance. García's dance steps for *son montuno* (reproduced in the previous chapter) imply an in-built *clave* because the steps are different on either side with one side accenting the anticipated crotchet and one, the anticipated quaver. Lapidus, however, states that the way of dancing *contratiempo* in *changüí* is to anticipate on the quaver in either bar, with no reference to a *clave* alternation; likewise his notation of the footwork in *nengón* has the dancers anticipating on the final crotchet, again without alternation (Lapidus 2005: 60, 65).

This absence in *changüí* of the *clave* and its subsequent appearance in the *son montuno* sextets and septets of the 1920s, suggests two possibilities. Either *son montuno* was not originally the 'equal mix' of European and African elements that has been stressed in the literature, and was later transformed, or 'Africanised' by contact with other Afro-Cuban genres such as *rumba* and their *clave*-based rhythmic structures; or that, with more percussive Afro-Cuban genres overwhelmingly accepted as 'African' music in Cuba, the influence of other less culturally dominant African traditions, in which the principle of *clave* (or timeline) is less prominent, have been overlooked in the study of *son*.

The first possibility is unlikely for a number of reasons. Although there is no tradition of polyrhythmic drumming in *changüí*, a large number of elements in the genre have been long established as being of African origin: an independent percussive pulse in the maracas and *guiro*; the bare hand playing technique used by the *bongosero* and its improvisatory role; the pairing of *bongó* drums and maracas into male and female; the presence of the *marimbula;* and the structural elements of call and response and repeated musical cycles.[25]

The second possibility takes into account the unique role of the *tres* in *changüí* and suggests that it is in inland West African chordophone traditions, ignored by Cuban scholars as an influence on Cuban musical development, that we will find the key to its development. The arpeggiated, plucked style of the *tres* suggests more affinities with African interlocking principles than with Spanish guitar technique, in that melody, rhythm and harmony coexist within a single ostinato. The lack of *clave* in *changüí* also suggests a parallel with these traditions in which, as Kubik has noted, the timeline has a lesser prominence as a structural feature (Kubik 1999: 63).

To examine the *tres* and its function with reference to African chordophone technique would place it at the heart of a new approach to early *son montuno,* moving beyond the simplification of treating the instrument as simply a relative of the guitar and acknowledging the importance of the *tres* ostinato as a harmonic as well as melodic entity. Plucked strings are of course not unique to African styles of music, but it is their use within an interlocking ostinato pattern which sets *son montuno* apart from other Cuban styles of the period, such as *punto guajiro,* and suggests a different pattern of development.

2.3 An alternative view of the *tres*

Kubik, in his work on the North American Blues, has identified a style of song in the Deep South of the United States - that of solo voice with plucked chordophone accompaniment - which he links with musical traditions of the West Central Sudanic belt of Africa (Mali, Northern Ghana,

[25] See Manuel 1995:36; Ortiz 1952 vol 2:279; León 1974:115.

northern Nigeria and northern Cameroon). This area is part of the wider Savannah-Sahel region of Western and Central Sudanic peoples, home to what Kubik calls a 'sung literary genre', in which a solo singer performs a semi-improvised song, self-accompanied on a plucked string instrument (Kubik 1999: 21). Though famously sung by *griots,* the 'professional bards' of this region, and chronicling historical and military events, there also exist many other types of self-accompanied song, dealing with less formal subject matter and open to all (Farris Thompson 1983:196).

Kubik argues that many musical features found in American Blues can be traced to this inland area of West Africa. Drawing on the work of Paul Oliver (1970) he cites as his reasons: (i) the lack of the asymetric timeline, an important feature in percussive music of the coastal regions but much less prominent away from the coast; (ii) the importance of plucked chordophones in this area; (iii) the greater use of off-beat accents in contrast to complex polyrhythms; (iv) the low social status of musicians and (v) pentatonic tuning patterns (Kubik 1999:63-64). The use of plucked chordophones, such as the plucked lute, is particularly important. DjeDje remarks on the variety of chordophones amongst Western and Central Sudanic peoples with the plucked lute being 'common to most groups' (DjeDje 2000:143). Charry characterises the plucked lute as 'the instrument par excellence of the Western African sahel' (northern Savannah) suggesting the prominence of a very different musical style from the percussive polyphony of the coastal regions (Charry 2000:122) This is not to suggest that drumming traditions are not important in this region, simply that the chordophone tradition has a cultural profile not found on the coast.

In the light of Kubik's research, an analysis of the Cuban *tres* that took account of the influence of West African chordophone techniques could clarify the early development of *son montuno* and the *tres montuno.* Eastern Cuba in the late 19th century shared many social and geographical features with the Deep South of the United States from which the Blues emerged. Small farms based on tobacco production rather then large sugar plantations meant that, while African social drumming and ritual had never been banned in Cuba, there were fewer opportunities for slaves and free Blacks to participate in large collective musical activities in the East. There were *cabildos* and *tumba francesa* societies (societies that promoted Afro-Haitian culture, including drumming traditions) in larger urban areas such as Santiago de Cuba. However, in the rural areas options were more limited and the comparative isolation of the rural population, and the rarity of large scale communal performing opportunities, encouraged more intimate musical styles. Parties in which local music making occurred often spawned specific genres, such as the *changüí,* which took their names from these gatherings (Alén 1998:67). As Sublette points out, the 19th century influx of large numbers of new slaves was mainly in the West of Cuba; the Eastern part of the island was already more creolised (Sublette 2004: 334). This further mirrored the situation in the United States in which the Slave Trade (though not slavery itself) had been abolished in 1807 (Thomas 1997:553).

Of course this is not to suggest that African rhythmic principles are absent in early forms of *son montuno,* simply that they were not present as part of drum and percussion ensembles. For example, Kubik has identified different 'levels of subjective timing, inherited from African music' and found in the New World. He describes the first three as: an elementary pulsation, the 'smallest unit of orientation'; a reference beat, a 'larger unit' that combines a regular number of elementary pulsations;

and a repeated cycle which is a yet larger regular combination of beats (1999:57).[26] These three levels are all present in both the North American Blues and in Cuban *changüí.*

His fourth level - the timeline - is not present in the Blues, and Kubik devotes a chapter to this 'strange absence', arguing that it was of lesser importance in the music of the Savannah, and that while musicians in some areas now use the timeline as an organising principle this may be due to the influence of West and Central African popular music, disseminated by the mass media (Kubik 1999: 51, 60). Likewise, neither Charry (2000) nor Codgell Dje Dje (2000) mentions timelines in their surveys of the music of this region. Again the timeline, in the form of *clave*, is absent in *changüí.*

The presence of a West and Central Sudanic song style in Eastern Cuba would not be necessarily due to large numbers of slaves from this area of Africa. Apart from the guesswork involved by the authorities in defining a slave's origin, the constant contact between musical styles in Africa itself, particularly along the West Coast and with European and other African styles in Cuba, makes a clear historical line impossible (Vélez 2000:8-9). Sublette argues that the different regional origins of slaves in the United States and Cuba has resulted in 'two distinct poles of African influence' - a basic layer from the Congo region in Cuba, and Sudanic (or *griot*) in the United States (Sublette 2004: 162). In this very sweeping analysis, basic differences between North American and Cuban music - such as 'swing' or the use of ternary in North America versus a generally binary Cuban secular music; or the lack of *clave* in North America and its dominance in Cuban music - are attributed largely to the place of origin of individual slaves in the New World (Sublette 2004: 159-163). Again, this argument relies on a kind of geographical essentialism and, while acknowledging social factors in the United States, ignores parallel social factors within Cuba which favoured different types of musical expression in different parts of the island.

The cultural contribution of Africans from the wider West African Mande area is acknowledged in popular language and song titles, such as *Quiquiribu Mandinga*, even without a dominant cultural presence. Moreover, what Kubik calls 'style clusters' are related less to the African areas from which the majority of the slave population came, than to the social and geographical situation in which they found themselves. (Kubik 1999: 98-99) 'Literary genres with minimal accompaniment performed within small communities should have a greater chance of survival in oppressive contexts than any music dependent on drums and large participating crowds' holds true for the United States (Kubik 1999:45). In the United States prohibition of drums and the scarcity of *cabildo*-type organisations limited communal drumming traditions while the ready availability of guitars and banjos encouraged other forms of music making. It was the social circumstances of groups in the New World which dictated which musical styles would become dominant, and in this sense many of the specifics of the American Deep South hold true for Eastern Cuba and distinguishes it from musical traditions in the Western part of the island.

African chordophones and the *tres*

There are parallels in chordophone design, function and playing style between the *tres* in *changüí* and West African plucked string instruments. From the three families of West African melodic

[26] See also 1994: 42-44.

instruments - harps, lutes and xylophones - the lute family has the clearest parallels with the *tres* in design and function. The lute, the oldest melodic instrument of the West African *griots*, is found throughout West Africa, from the Mande *koni* complex, through the Wolof *xalam* and the Fulbe *hoddu* the Soninke *gambare*, to the Moorish *tidinit*, all of which are essentially the same four or five stringed lutes with differences in size (Charry 1996: 9, 13, Dje Dje 2000: 143). Although the musical function of the lute is the same as found in the other instrumental chordophone families, in providing both accompanying ostinato and melodic invention, the playing technique is distinct. It is based on one hand - in the case, for example, of the Mande *koni*, two fingers and thumb - providing the interlocking ostinato (Charry 2000: 189).

The *tres*, likewise, is defined by Orovio as a plucked string instrument, and creates repeated ostinati from interlocking plucked notes. Both types of instrument - lute and *tres* - can be played with a pick, though this is not always the case (Charry 2000:189, Sublette 2004: 337). However, *treseros* play with downstrokes only, rather than interlocking between fingers, creating a much less fluid sound (Lapidus 2005: 55). Moreover, according to Amador, 'The plectrum would strike directly, that is downwards. Very often, on returning the plectrum to the string to play again, an involuntary sound was produced with the plectrum, which gradually becomes part of the riff and this is characteristic of this instrument' (Amador 1997: 30).

There is also a preference for playing on open strings; for example, with the Mande *koni* only the two longest strings are fingered, the rest played open. Although Charters, Oliver and Sublette all note the parallels between the lute (in particular the Wolof *xalam*) and the North American banjo, the tuning of the *tres* (d-f-a) also favours open diatonic arpeggiation, and it was this aspect that was emphasised particularly in the arpeggiated triads of the earliest styles.[27] However, the doubled *tres* strings remain a unique feature. Although (as Charry shows with his description of the most important *koni* tunings) lute strings can be doubled an octave apart, the *tres* strings, which are struck simultaneously, are unique to the instrument (Charry 2000: 162-164).

It is, however, in playing technique rather then design that parallels are clearest between West African chordophones and the *tres* in *changüí*. The first parallel I would like to highlight is in the way in which an accompaniment pattern is produced, and in this the *tres* is linked to a wider African musical principle, that of interlocking. As I mentioned in the introduction, interlocking involves the sharing and alternation of a melodic line or ostinato, between fingers (or finger and thumb); between alternate hands; between alternate players; or between multiple players within larger groups.[28] The features common to the diverse instrumental combinations are (i) alternation rather than simultaneous sounding of pitches to create (depending on the resonance of the instruments involved) both melody and harmony and (ii) repetition of a melodic and rhythmic cell with infinite variations.

The aspect of interlocking I am highlighting here is its use as a means of harmony creation, in the avoidance of the use of chords or block harmony. A constant flow of single notes can create the aural illusion of chordal harmony; and the practice of interlocking, whether between different

[27] See Charters 1981: 59-69; Oliver 1970: 50; Sublette 2004: 165.
[28] See, for example, Arom (1984, 1991) Cooke (1994) and Kubik (1960, 1964, 1994) Jones (1951) Berliner (1981) Wegner (1993) Ballantine (1964) Nketia (1962, 1974) Kirby (1933) Tracey (1948, 1994) and Anku (1997).

musicians, hands or the fingers of one hand, by its nature discourages block harmony. With one player, and at the simplest level, this can be the interlocking between two fingers in the playing of a plucked string instrument, such as West African plucked lutes, many African popular guitar styles and, using the same principle but without the alternation of fingers, the Cuban *tres*. These instruments are not strummed to create chordal harmony, but are used as accompanying melodic instruments, moving between melody and arpeggiated harmony. The technique of plucking rather than strumming gives players a more rhythmic role. It is this tradition that has been continued by African guitarists and, I argue, in the *tres* technique in *son montuno*. Rather than being seen as an offshoot of the Spanish guitar, the *tres* can thus be linked to a wider West African tradition of plucked lutes. The interlocking created by the fingers of one hand is replaced by a constant flow of notes hit with a plectrum, but the principle of constant movement and using a flow of notes to create the illusion of block harmony remains.

The second parallel between African chordophones and the *tres* is in the role of the chordophone in the accompaniment of voices or other instruments. The creation of harmony from a continuous flow of notes and the interplay between accompaniment and melodic comment and ornamentation characterise both Mande chordophone style and the *tres* in *changüí*. Discussing Mande music, Charry maintains that instrumental music is 'driven by a mix of variations woven within a single accompaniment pattern, and give and take between accompaniment-pattern playing and linear melodic-solo playing. An instrumental performance consists of maintaining the melodic or harmonic cycle while weaving in and out of these different kinds of playing' (Charry 2000:168). The result varies between instrumental families: with regard to the koni, he notes that 'Owing to the melodic orientation of the instrument, the distinction between accompaniment pattern playing and solo melodic flourishes is less clear in koni playing than in kora playing' (Charry 2000: 189).

Likewise, Knight, in his description of Mandinka music, identifies three types of *kumbengo*, or 'sounding together' of vocal and instrumental lines, ranging from complete duplication of the vocal line, through similar melodic shape or partial duplication to complete independence and comments that the basic accompaniment pattern 'may vary from a short ostinato to a complete doubling of the vocal line' (Knight 1984: 6, 19-23). He adds that these harmonically static ostinatos 'function ultimately as rhythmically complex, polyphonic drones, supporting the longer, more melodically developed vocal line'(Knight 1984: 24).

In the accompaniment of vocal music, an accompanying ostinato can alternate with melodic flourishes to punctuate the story. Charters describes a *balafon* (xylophone) accompaniment as a 'simple rhythmic figure that repeated itself over and over, with the occasional flurries of notes to mark sections of the story', while, according to Charry, 'vocal pauses can be punctuated with short solo melodic bursts or extended solo melodic instrumental playing' (Charters 1981: 29; Charry 2000:14).

This way of constructing an accompanying pattern, in which a melodic and harmonic cycle is provided by the same instrument is common to all three families of melodic instruments, (lute, harp or xylophone) found in West African countries of the former Mande Empire. In *changüí*, as I shall show, this relaxed movement between different types of accompaniment has become a more formalised affair. In the *largo* section, the *tres* follows the vocal line closely, though melodic comment at the end of

phrases has been replaced by arpeggiated confirmation of the harmonic centre, while in the *montuno*, there is an incorporation of the melodic line within the repeated ostinato. In both sections, the *tresero* provides a combination of interlocking accompaniment and melodic duplication within a flow of horizontal harmony.

Further Parallels: The *Tres* and the 'African' Guitar

If we accept that the *tres montuno* developed out of the adaptation of traditional African chordophone techniques to a Cuban instrument structurally similar to the guitar, we would expect to find parallels in the development of guitar techniques, also based on traditional styles, in Africa. By the early twentieth century the impact of the guitar was felt beyond the European communities in Africa for a number of reasons. Firstly, as a foreign instrument it was not identified with a specific ethnic group, or by extension musical style, and could therefore be adapted for a variety of musical purposes. Secondly, as a more modern (in the African context) instrument it had a kudos that traditional instruments lacked but, at the same time, held no restrictions as to its use, unlike, for example, instruments reserved for *griots* (Charry 1994:23). And thirdly, and more recently, it has been used as a link between ancient and modern musical traditions on many parts of the continent from Senegal to Zimbabwe.

The key to its swift acceptance lies not just in the strong chordophone tradition on the continent, but also in the easy adaptability of the guitar to other indigenous instrumental styles. The two-fingered plucked playing style, using the thumb and index finger on lower and higher strings respectively, echoes lute techniques and recreates the interlocking patterns that are a feature of musical organisation on much of the continent in both chordophone and other instrumental groups (Kaye 2000:77).

Charry's work on what the 'Mande' style of guitar playing in the larger Western Sahel-Savannah area is of interest here as this is the area that Kubik concentrated on in relation to the Blues. The guitar is clearly a link here between the ancient and the modern. In particular, the adaptation of the guitar to the traditional repertories of the *balafon* and *koni* in the 1920s has given the instrument a formal acceptance within the *griot* tradition (Charry 1994; 36). There is also a wider tradition of self-accompanied solo singing within the Sahel-Savannah culture, not restricted to *griots*, in which the guitar can represent a variety of local instruments and in which interlocking alternation and repetition is the key.

If, however, we examine the development of guitar styles in other parts of Africa, this type of indigenous instrumental representation by the guitar is not uncommon. For example the role of the guitar in Congolese popular music has also grown out of traditional styles, with the guitar beginning as a solo acoustic instrument in the recreation of *sanza* (small Central African lamellophone) and xylophone patterns (Wa Mukuna 1994:62). In Zimbabwe, recreation on the guitar of the harmonic ostinati of the *mbira dza vadzimu* (22 keyed lamellophone) took on a political and symbolic dimension during the struggle for independence (Brown 1994:78). In other words, in areas where the chordophone tradition was less strong, there still emerged an interlocking guitar technique, adapted from the specific musical features of local instruments.

There are strong parallels between Cuban *tres* technique and African guitar technique, both with those based on a chordophone tradition and those in which the guitar represents other instruments. The former are closer to *changüí*, in which the *tres* is the sole harmonic and melodic provider, filling in harmonic information between melodic phrases, while the latter, such as the complex interlocking between three or more guitars in Congolese popular music, correspond more closely to later *son*'s larger, more complex polyrhythmic interactions. This further strengthens the thesis that *tres* technique, especially within the structure of the *tres montuno*, owes much to wider African musical principles, beyond being part of a instrumental family similar to African chordophones. The development of *tres* technique within the *son montuno* ensemble saw a consolidation of these principles, as closer contact with musical styles originating in the West of the island, such as *rumba*, introduced more complex rhythmic relationships to the ensemble.

2.4 An analysis of *Mi Son Tiene Candela*

I would now like to examine an example of *changüí* with reference to some of the chordophone techniques mentioned by Charry. My aim here is not to present an exhaustive study of *changüí* but to highlight a number of musical similarities that suggest a through line from African chordophone techniques to the early development of a distinctive *changüí tres* style, and eventually to the piano. The first audio recordings of *changüí* were not made until the 1980s (though apparently film footage exists from the 1960s), so there is no record of the style of *changüí* played in the late 19th or early 20th centuries (Lapidus: personal communication 8.5.06). It is necessary, therefore, to use contemporary recordings. These of course cannot provide a true picture of the original style, as played before the emergence of *son montuno* as a national, rather than regional, genre, and this makes issues of comparison more difficult.

It is problematic to compare a contemporary rendition of a traditional style, *changüí*, with the earliest recordings of *son montuno*, featured later in this chapter. Contemporary *changüí* players will have been influenced by considerably more musical styles and genres than their forbears and *changüí*, given its role in social functions, will have gone through many adaptations and developments. However, in playing a regional variant of a much more dominant genre, it has been in the interest of *changüí* musicians to maintain its distinct qualities; moreover, as Lapidus points out, after the Revolution, *changüí* 'went through a folklorisation process in which many of its elements were stabilised' and Grupo Changüí de Guantanamo, originally formed in 1945, became the official representative of the genre (Lapidus 2004: 241).

While it cannot be a true comparison, I believe that there are sufficient established qualities in the genre to warrant its examination as a means to illuminate the early development of the *tres* within the *son montuno* ensemble. As Acosta notes, 'it is not the set forms but the way of producing them that determines the particular character of our music' (Acosta 1983:33). Even if individual elements of *changüí* change, the way the music is produced remains constant. This ties in with Floyd's notion of an African 'cultural memory' and the idea that it is in the process of creation, rather than the finished object, that the tradition is found (Floyd 1995:8).

In this section I compare the role of the *tres* in *changüí* with features identified by Charry as characteristic of a West African chordophone style; both genres are contemporary representations of a longstanding style, not tied to a particular era, making the comparison more legitimate. Likewise to compare the *tres* in *changüí* with the guitar in Africa is to compare general trends in playing technique, based on the adaptation of long standing musical principles to a different instrumental design.

The transcriptions below are from *Mi Son Tiene Candela,* performed by the Grupo Changüí de Guantanamó in 1988 (Traditional Crossroads CD4290). I have transcribed a section from the *largo* and the basic *tres montuno* pattern, showing only *tres*, vocals and maracas in order to demonstrate the similarities and differences between the *tres* and vocal line, within the regular pulsation of the maracas.

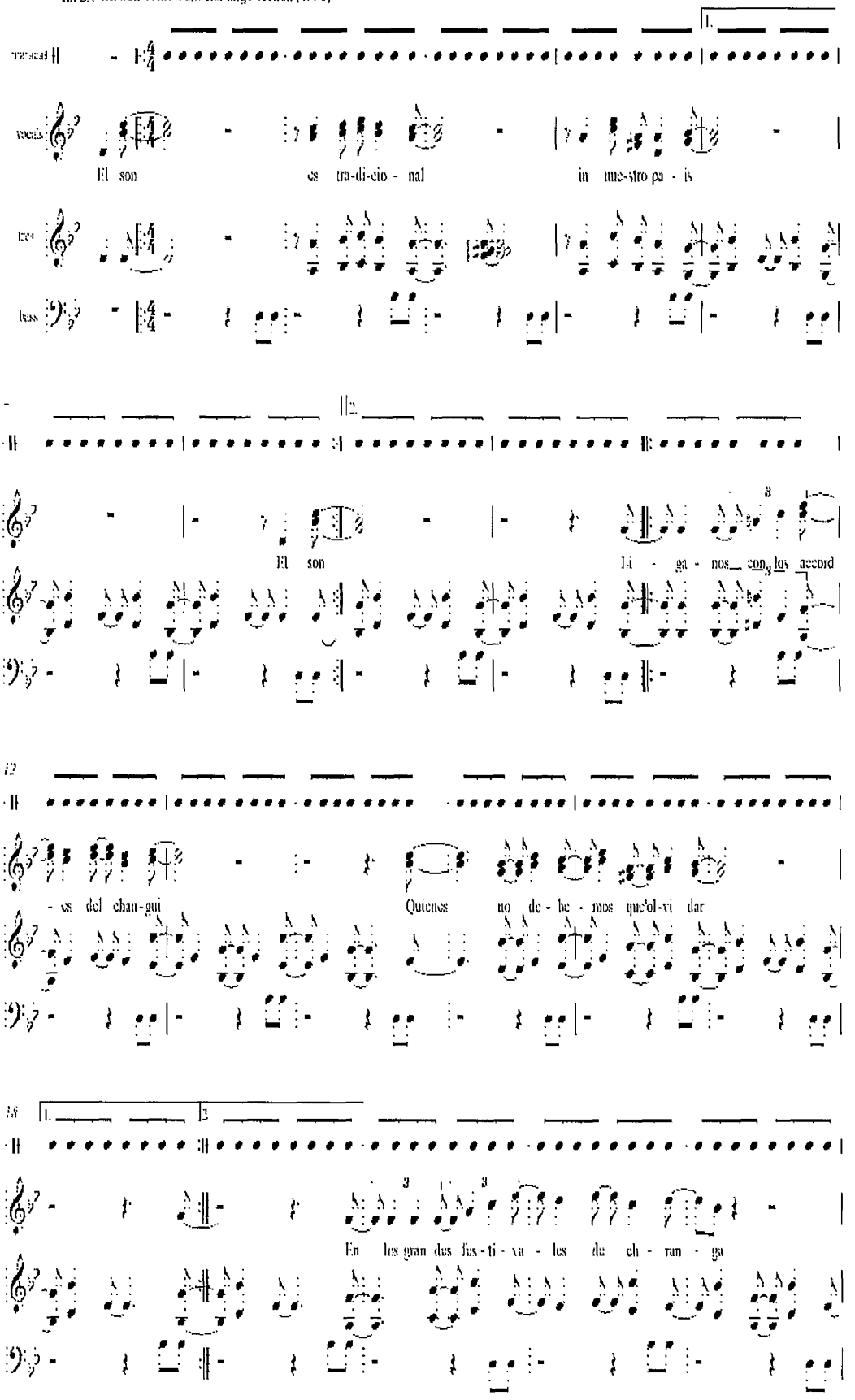
The formal two part structure that developed in *changüí* and *son montuno* contrasts with the Mande repertoire studied by Charry, in which pieces often move between two harmonic centres to provide contrasting sections, but there is no corresponding change in playing technique (Charry 2000:189). In *changüí,* this division into two sections resulted in two distinct styles of *tres* playing, corresponding to the verse and chorus. However, elements within the *tres* style of the both sections can be examined with reference to African chordophone traditions.

Mi Son Tiene Candela begins with a statement, as an introduction, of the *tres montuno* (to be later heard in the *montuno* section) and this is followed by the first verse statement of the *largo*, also performed by solo *tres*. Musical example 2.1 (CD1:1, 53") shows the second statement of the *largo* melody, in which the vocalists join the *tres*. The tempo is 252 b/pm, considerably faster than later styles of *son montuno,* but, unlike later styles, there is no corresponding increase in tempo for the *montuno* section.

In spite of Alén's assertion that the closed *largo* section is of European origin (Alén 1998:68), the role of the *tres* within this section has parallels with the role of West African chordophones and suggests the possibility of a more open-ended structure. In between vocal phrases, in which harmony is largely implied due to the melodic role of the *tres*, the *tresero* reinforces the harmonic aspect by means of arpeggiated chords (resorting just once to a split chord in bar 3). These linking ostinati are known as *pasos de calle* and serve also to prepare the singer for the next line; they are a unique feature of *changüí*, not being present in *nengón* and *kiribá*, nor in later *son montuno* (Lapidus 2005: 57, 63). In this constant movement between melodic statement and harmonic ostinato, typical of traditional Mande music (Charry 2000:14), the harmonic reinforcement in between phrases here is of sufficient importance that the vocalist's melodic phrases in the first section (bars 1-5) are of uneven lengths in order to accommodate it. This harmonic reinforcement at the end of phrases was rendered unnecessary by the arrival of the strummed guitar in the ensemble, though it persisted in some *sones* into the 1920s.

According to Lapidus the *tres* in *changüí* should always follow the melody strictly in unison (when not reinforcing the harmony by means of arpeggiation at the end of phrases) (Lapidus 2005: 57-59). Here, however, in places the *tresero* follows a slightly different line, causing what appears to be a dissonance but which, given the speed, would not necessarily be heard as one. For example the vocal AF# against the *tres* Bb in bar 4 and the Eb/C/ and F/D vocals against the *tres* D and Eb in bar 12. Moreover, the tuning of the *tres* (two sets of strings tuned in octaves and the middle set in unison) means that octave displacement regularly upsets the flow of the melody.

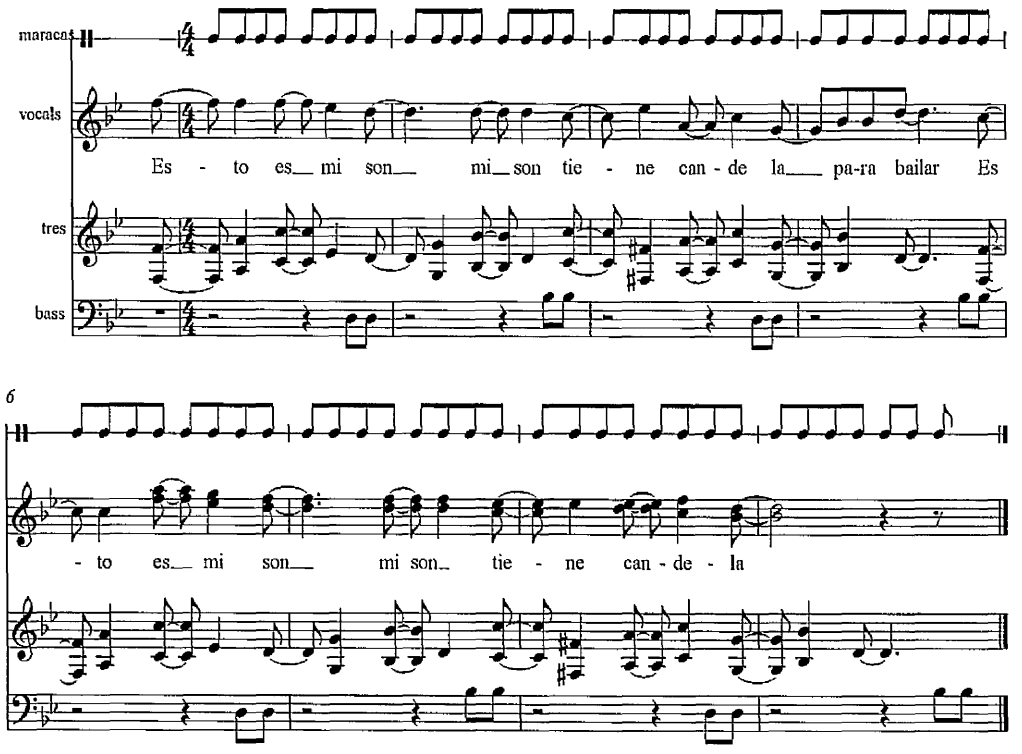
Ex 2.1 Mi Son Tiene Candela, largo section (1998)



Within the *montuno* section (Ex 2.2 CD1:1, 1'54"), the *tres* again follows the line of the melody, in this case the vocal call and response, while frequently also providing a supporting harmony. This becomes more pronounced in the second part of the transcription but the basic melody remains; the vocal melody is thus almost wholly incorporated into the *tres montuno* itself. There is constant syncopation in both melody and *tres* and this emphasis on off-beats corresponds to one of Kuibk's five musical features, mentioned earlier in this chapter, which he uses in order to link the Blues with inland West Africa. Also of interest here is the harmonic sequence which goes beyond the simple tonic/dominant axis implied by the literature by starting the sequence in F (the flattened 7th) before establishing the G minor tonality. The bass is loosely tuned to D and Bb, making this progression easier.

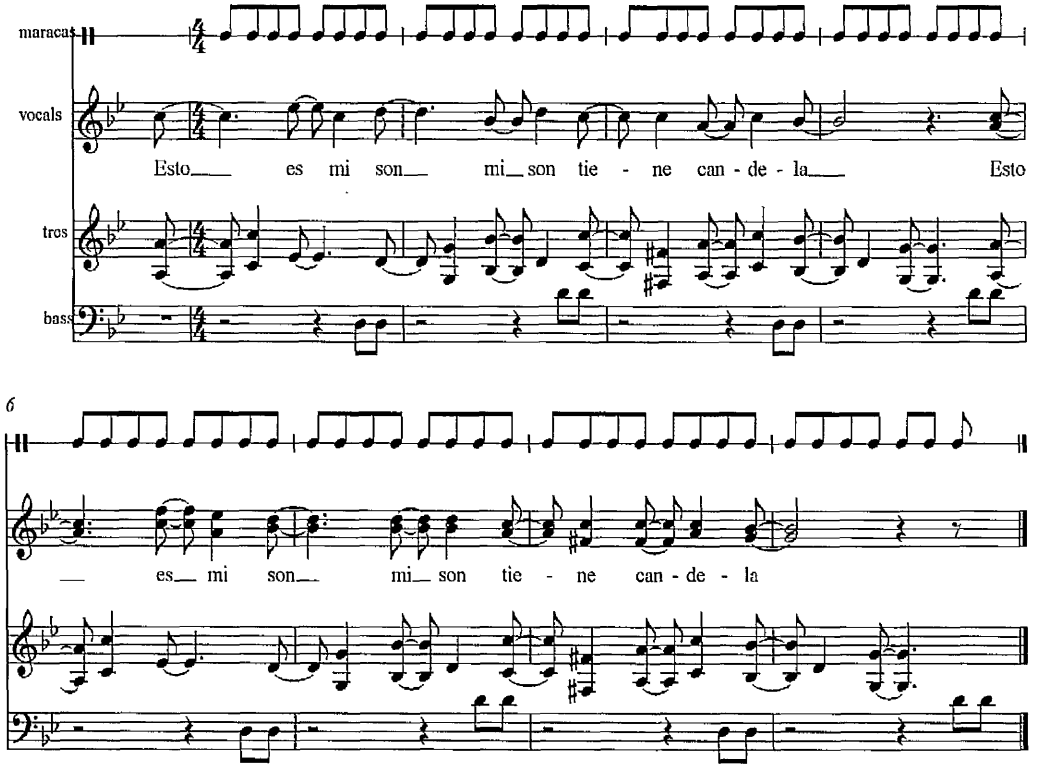
While in the *largo* section the *tres* melody closely replicates the vocal line, and then alternates with harmonic support, in the *montuno* section melody and arpeggiated accompaniment are interlocked together within the *tres* ostinato. Charry's 'give and take' between accompaniment and melodic playing has here become a much more formalised arrangement, but there are still parallels in the different playing techniques for each section, and in the movement between melodic statement and harmonic ostinato in the *largo* (Charry 2000:168). This movement from one to the other persisted in later versions of *son montuno,* in spite of the arrival of the guitar and a greater harmonic stability in the ensemble.

Ex 2.2 Mi Son Tiene Candela (1988)



As I mentioned above, Acosta maintains that it is the way the music is created, rather than the finished product, which defines Cuban music (Acosta 1983: 33). Another version of *Mi Son Tiene Candela*, recorded again by Grupo Changüí de Guantanamó but this time in 2001, illustrates this point (Disky DC640752). While parts of the 2001 *tres montuno* are identical to the 1988 version, there are differences, though slight, concerning the order of the notes or inversion of a triad. However nothing has changed in the way that the *tres montuno* has been constructed: the use of arpeggiation to create harmony and the incorporation of the melodic line within the ostinato. Likewise, although the *coro* harmonies have changed, it is recognisably the same chorus. Although the *tres* is tuned a semitone higher on this recording I have transcribed in tonic G for ease of comparison. The tempo is slightly slower than the previous example at 240 bpm and again is maintained throughout (Ex 2.3, CD1:2, 1'43").

Ex 2.3 Mi Son Tiene Candela (2001)



2.5 The Emergence of *Son Montuno* in Havana

Examination of the development of *son montuno* during the late 1910s and 1920s is crucial to the understanding of the subsequent emergence of the *conjunto* piano. During this period, rhythmic relationships within the *tumbao* were gradually modified under the influence of a more *clave*-dependent rhythmic system (that of *rumba*), and the *tres montuno* was transformed. From an ostinato

based on duplication of the *coro* line, arpeggiated harmonic reinforcement and relentless syncopation, it became a more integrated *montuno*, with a looser interpretation of the melody and the stressing of more specific accents, shared or alternated with other members of the ensemble and increasingly governed by the *clave* rhythm. This would have a direct bearing on the later development of the *conjunto* piano in which the *clave* rhythm affected both the internal construction of the piano *montuno* and the shared accentuation of specific beats within the *tumbao*.

Son montuno emerged in Havana in the 1910s, following a reorganisation in the army which stationed soldiers away from their home region and set the scene for musical exchange; this marked a turning point in the development of the genre (Sublette 2004: 334). The change from rural to urban and from amateur to (semi) professional - with more consistent performing opportunities and an emerging recording and radio industry - provided a new backdrop for *soneros*. Closer contact with other urban music, above all *rumba,* created opportunities for experimentation and change, and rhythmic structures long established in other Afro-Cuban genres began to permeate the *tumbao*. Musical elements that would later become standard, such as *clave* awareness and the related alternation of rhythmic tension and release, began to emerge; other features such as the use of anticipation, already present in *changüi*, became more formalised. Instrumental expansion led to the standardisation of the *tumbao* of *tres*, guitar, bass and percussion, and rhythmic relationships between these instruments became more consistent.

In this section I trace the development of the *tres montuno* within the *son montuno* ensemble, from its pivotal role as the key provider of instrumental harmony and melody in *changüí* to the emergence of a more fixed set of rhythmic relationships which emerged in the expanded *tumbao* of the 1920s. Instrumental changes within the ensemble, for reasons of social acceptability, recording clarity and musical development, removed some of the rough quality of the musical sound. The use of string bass rather than the less precisely-tuned *marímbula* or *botija*, the harmonic support of the guitar and the melodic role of the trumpet combined to give a more rooted quality to the harmony and a clearer timbre, more suitable for recording.

The role of the *tres montuno* was modified; its fundamental function as the provider of a combination of melody, harmony and rhythm remained, but the development and expansion of interlocking accents, synchronised with the tension and release of the *clave* rhythm and shared amongst members of the ensemble, changed the context. The *tres montuno* was transformed from a combination of constantly syncopated solo melody interspersed with harmonic reinforcement, into a more integrated, though still melodically orientated ostinato. Rhythmic structures shared with other members of the *tumbao* became more consistent. Thus in the *conjunto*, pianists were not only imitating the constant movement and arpeggiation of the *tres*, but its ensemble role within these shared structures. As with the section on *changüí*, I am not trying to present an exhaustive study of *son montuno* during this period, but rather to highlight specific elements that have a bearing on the later development of the piano *montuno*.

Instrumental Expansion and Substitution

The two most important changes in the *son montuno* ensemble in the early years of the

twentieth century were the addition of the guitar and the substitution of the *botija* or *marímbula* by string bass. While, as I showed in the previous chapter, the guitar was already present in the ensemble in the Eastern part of the island before the genre reached Havana, the string bass was a Havana-inspired change.

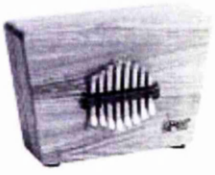
There is no established date or occasion when the guitar joined the *tres* in the *son montuno* ensemble. Indeed there are some scholars who argue that it was always part of the genre, present either before the *tres* itself or at the same time (eg Alén 1998:71). While the acceptance of *changüí* and *nengón* as some of the oldest forms of *son* places the *tres* in the ensemble first, it is clear that the guitar was being used from the early 20th century, either within the ensemble or, under the influence of *trova*, as the sole accompanying instrument. Duos such as Floro Zorilla y Miguel Zaballa, for example, performing together from 1906, used solo guitar accompaniment for *son montuno* in a 1919 recording, keeping the musical structure of *largo* and *montuno* sections but without the ostinato of the *tres montuno* (Columbia CK 62234).

Within the *son* ensemble, the guitar was used to support the harmonic structure and freed the *tres* from being the sole harmony provider. Initially this did not radically change the role of the *tres*; it was still melodically orientated, providing a combination of melody and linking arpeggiation in the *largo* section and a more arpeggiated, though still melodic, ostinato in the *montuno* section. The addition of chordal harmony with the guitar, however, clarified the tonality of the songs and gave the music an audible, rather than implied, harmony during the more melodic passages of the *tres*. The deliberate mistuning between the double strings of the *tres* was also counterbalanced by a more precise guitar tuning (Sublette 2004: 338).

A similar situation pertained to bass instruments. Neither the *marímbula* nor *botija* could be tuned precisely, nor would either be necessarily tuned to the *tres* (Lapidus 2005b: 53). Moreover, neither had a sonority suited to contemporary recording conditions. The string bass had a less complex timbre and could provide a much more rooted harmony, and all three - bass, guitar and *tres* - had to tune to each other. Again there is no firm date for the change to string bass; the Sexteto Habanero was formed in 1918 with Antonio Bacallao on *botija* but by 1923 was using string bass (Moore 1997:97, Sublette 2004:341).[29]

[29] The use of string bass was also perhaps a more deliberate change for a number of reasons. The ongoing repression carried out against *soneros* by the authorities during the 1910s was directed primarily against instruments of African origin and the *marimbula* would have been considered, along with the *bongó*, a primitive instrument and worthy of confiscation (Moore 1997:96). Secondly, with the advent of radio and the recording industry, the string bass had a clearer timbre for recording purposes. Thirdly, there was the need for social acceptance. In the 1910s, *son*'s popularity was boosted by its dissemination in *acadamias de baile*, beer garden dances put on by breweries and double-edged sponsorship of politicians (Moore 1997:98-100). For greater social respectability groups needed to dilute their country image, in much the same way as the *tres* would be replaced by the piano in the 1930s, and the string bass fitted this perfectly.

Botija



Marímbula

Guitar, bass, and later trumpet, all contributed then to a clearer tonality but I argue that it was the addition of the guitar which first enabled the *tres*' gradual move towards a more independent and rhythmically complex *montuno. Treseros* were liberated from having to reinforce and clarify the harmonic centre, either by arpeggiation between phrases or within the *montuno*, though of course these elements remained. However, rather than being the sole harmonic provider, the *tresero* was now free to augment existing harmonic structure by way of an interlocking sequence in which fewer, but more carefully placed, notes could provide additional rhythmic momentum. As I will show, this move towards a more rhythmically complex *montuno* was prompted, above all, by the adoption of the *clave* as a rhythmic principle in the *son* ensemble.

The adoption of *clave* as a rhythmic principle

With the arrival of *son montuno* in Havana around 1910, the genre was increasingly played by musicians with closer links to *rumba*, in which a *clave* rhythm and *claves* (the instrument) were already present (Sublette 2005: 335). While there is no evidence that the use of the *clave* was taken directly from any one genre, as I showed in the opening chapter much of the internal rhythmic structuring of the *son montuno tumbao* was strongly influenced by *rumba*'s interplay between the *clave* rhythm and other percussion lines.

Soneros were also frequently involved in the performance of Afro-Cuban genres such as *conga de comparsa* and the religious music of various traditions (Moore 1997: 94). While the *claves* were not instrumentally present in all of these genres, the feel and underlying structure was reliant on the inherent syncopation and internal tension and release of different variants of the *clave* rhythm. Likewise, in spite of the absence of the claves instrumentally in *danzón*, the concept of *clave* as an organising rhythmic principle had been present for some time in the *banqueato* rhythm (see Chapter 3). Thus the concept of *clave* was frequently present without the *claves* being part of an ensemble.

Claves

According to Roy, an oral tradition in Santiago places *claves* (the instrument) in *son montuno* ensembles at the 1892 Santiago carnival (Roy 2002:120). Linares is more cautious and places the *claves* in the *son* ensemble from the 1910s (Linares 1979:107) However, *clave* as a concept, the system

of tension and release which, from the 1940s, became the driving force in *son montuno*, took longer to take root and there is no clear line of its adoption as an organising rhythmic principle in the way that it already was in *rumba* and *danzón*. Although the *clave* rhythm was present, it only gradually permeated the internal rhythmic structure of the *tumbao,* and did not automatically dictate other rhythmic relationships within the ensemble. As I will show, *clave* could be ignored or modified if the song structure demanded it.

While the entry of the guitar into the ensemble, and its harmonic support, gave the *tres* greater freedom, this alone does not explain the shift in the *montuno* from a fusion of simple harmonic arpeggiation and melodic reinforcement, albeit syncopated, to an ostinato with a greater specificity in the accentuation of certain beats. The *clave* rhythm, and the more general influence of *rumba*, while not yet strictly dictating rhythmic relationships, was altering the underlying feel of the music and the development of the *tres montuno* comprises a gradual move from the consistently syncopated arpeggiation of *changüí,* with its more informal pushing against the beat, to a stricter rhythmic structure. The principle of interlocking harmony creation was still present but, with a reduced harmonic responsibility, fewer notes were needed and those that remained were given, by means of accentuation, a greater rhythmic significance. The ability to interact precisely with other members of the ensemble, particularly the bass, grew in importance and this would be one of the reasons why the piano was adapted so successfully to this role.

2.6 An analysis of the role of the *tres* in selected *sones* 1918-31

The following transcriptions are presented in order to illustrate the different ways in which the addition of the guitar and the *clave* rhythm changed the focus of the *tres* part, in both *largo* and *montuno* sections, between 1918 and 1931. The 1918 Victor recordings of the Sexteto Habanero Godínez are amongst the very first recordings of *son montuno.*[30]. 1931 represents the year that the final recordings were made before the effects of the Depression made themselves felt and the American recording industry temporarily left the island.

These recordings have a more relaxed feel than contemporary *changüí* examples (though, of course, we have no information on tempi in early 20th century *changüí,* and a true comparison cannot be made). The tempo of the *montuno* section is slower - ranging in these examples from 144 b/pm (*Martillo Claro*) to 208 b/pm (*Mujer Bandolera*). Moreover, the songs start with a slower *largo* section with a marked accelerando into the *montuno* section - in *Mujeres Enamórenme* from 136b/pm to 208b/pm - whereas there is little or no change in *changüí* .

According to Lapidus, constant syncopation in the *tres* montuno decreased with the use of the *clave* rhythm and this is borne out by these examples; the 1918 examples show considerably more syncopation than those from 1927 – 31 (Lapidus 2004: 243). The constant push against the beat of *changüí* was replaced by a more flowing *tres montuno*; *treseros*, while still dependent on the vocal outline, and continuing to combine melodic doubling with arpeggiated harmonic reinforcement, had a

[30] Some recordings made between 1916 and 1918, also featuring a group specially created by Alfredo Boloña, were marketed by the Brunswick label. Described as 'pseudo-*sones*' by Moore, it is unclear whether there is any crossover with the Sexteto Habanero Godínez recordings (Moore 1997: 102).

greater freedom to experiment. With the strummed guitar providing a constant harmonic backing and an off-beat stress, *treseros* could move away from the alternation of melody and arpeggiated harmony, typical of *changüí*, in which melodic statement and harmonic support were separate entities, to a more integrated type of *montuno* in which rhythm and accentuation played a greater part. In this, the *clave*, with its own internal logic, provided a rhythmic framework.

For the *tres montuno* examples, I have, in the majority of cases, taken the *tres montuno* from the solo rendition at the beginning of the *montuno* section, before the entry of the voices, as this is the point of greatest clarity. It is important to restate that, just as a *tres montuno* is not fixed for each song and similar *montunos* can be used for many different pieces, it retains a flexibility within the song itself and the opening statement is not necessarily what is played throughout.

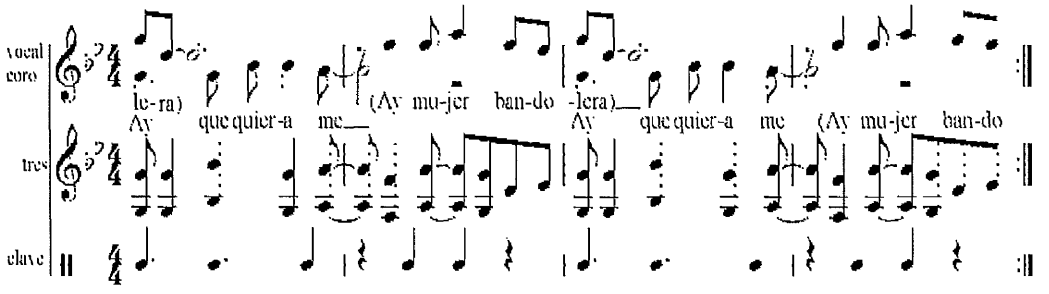
The Sexteto Habanero Godínez Recordings

As early as 1918, the Victor label recorded six songs by the Sexteto Habanero Godínez at the Hotel Inglaterra, Havana. This group, put together by *bongósero* Alfredo Boloña, included the *tresero* Carlos Godínez, later a founder member of the Sexteto Habanero, Manuel Corona on guitar, María Teresa Vera on vocals, and an unnamed *botija* player (Díaz Ayala 1995: 4; Sublette 2004: 335-336). Two of the songs, *Mujer Bandolera* and *Rosa Que Linda Eres,* demonstrate the distinctive influence of the *clave* rhythm on both the melodic line and the *tres montuno*.

In both songs, the structure is not *largo-montuno*, but rather two call and response sections, effectively two *montunos*, with the first functioning as the *largo* section in being slower and with a less syncopated *tres montuno*. There is thus no melodic statement from the *tres* in the first section of either song; the instrument provides a cyclical ostinato from the start.

In the first example, *Mujer Bandolera*, the *clave* for the second *montuno* section is 3:2; in other words, the phrase starts on the three side of the *clave* (see Chapter 1). Although the vocal line does not, as a whole, show a greater level of syncopation in either bar, the placing of the highest point of the melodic line on the third crotchet of the second bar stresses the two side of the clave rhythm. I have transcribed just vocals, *tres montuno* and *clave,* as the bass in this recording is virtually inaudible due to the limitations of both the *botija* as an instrument and contemporary recording facilities, and I have repeated the cycle to incorporate the overlapping in vocals (Ex 2.4, CD1:3, 1'35")

Ex 2.4 Mujer Bandolera (1918)

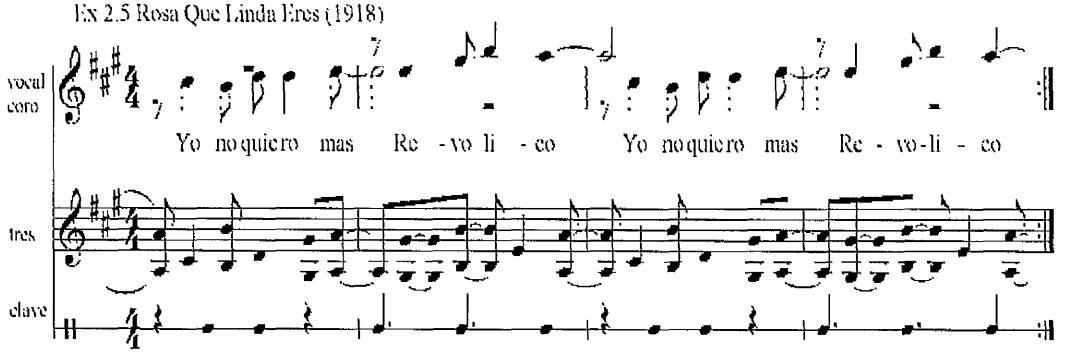


With the harmonic contribution of the guitar, there is no need for the *tresero* to include regular arpeggiation and there is thus more freedom to foreground rhythm and accent. The *tresero* maintains a strong rhythmic drive throughout this second *montuno,* while still following the basic outline of the melody and although echoing the constant syncopation of *changüí,* the *montuno* is rhythmically distinct on each side of the *clave*. However, there is no sense of the *clave* dictating the rhythmic outline of the *montuno.* Although the rhythmic outline resembles the type of counter-rhythmic 2:3 piano *montuno* found in the later *conjunto*, the *clave* here is 3:2. While different on each side of the *clave*, it provides neither a counter rhythmic presence nor a strong reinforcement of the *clave* rhythm.

Also of striking is the emphasis on the *bombo* note, the only syncopated beat of the *son clave.* The rhythmic coincidence of *tres*, *clave* and bass on this beat is found in even comparatively unsyncopated *tres montunos* (for example *Martillo Claro* below) and suggests not only the internalising of the *clave* rhythm but also the influence of other dance genres on the internal rhythmic structure of *son montuno* during this period.[31]

The second, very brief *montuno* of *Rosa Que Linda Eres* (Ex 2.5, CD1:4, 2'40") shows a more sophisticated level of *clave* influence in the *coro* line. Again the bass is inaudible and I have transcribed vocals, *tres* and *clave* to show the rhythmic interplay between them.

Ex 2.5 Rosa Que Linda Eres (1918)



The stressed fourth crotchet in the vocals (on the three side of the *clave*) and the avoidance of the first beat of the next bar are part of a pattern of fourth beat stress (shared with guitar and *bongó*) and of rhythmic/melodic anticipation. This was in part inherited from the fourth beat emphasis of the bass (*marímbula* or *botija*) and *bongó* in *changüí,* and also demonstrates the influence of *rumba guaguancó*, in which the open notes of the *tumbadora* (lowest conga) sound on the fourth beat (Lapidus 2005: 56). However, its placing here, every other bar, suggests a strong *clave* influence.

This fourth crotchet emphasis is most closely associated with the anticipated bass, not fully in evidence at this stage, in which the two final quavers of *changüí* bass are replaced by one stressed

[31] This rhythmic coincidence occurs within the commonly cited *tumbao* rhythmic structure (eg Robbins 1990) which includes an anticipated or *tresillo* bass. There are many instances of an unsyncopated bass line where this concurrence is absent.

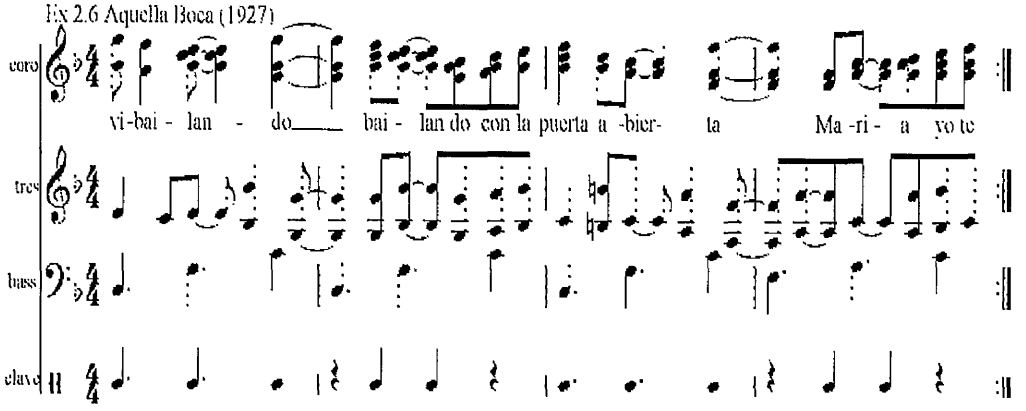
crotchet. However, in this instance, it is the *coro* that provides the crotchet anticipation, and, as well as destabilising the rhythmic pulse, also anticipates the harmonic progression, with the tonic (A) of the following bar sounding a crotchet earlier. Thus staggered anticipation (examined in Chapter 1 between piano and bass) is here between *coro* and *tres*. The influence of the *clave* rhythm has broken the close rhythmic relationship between *tres* and *coro*; the *tresero* continues to provide quaver anticipation, as in *changüí*, even as the vocal line changes to a crotchet anticipation. As we shall see, this loosening of ties between the vocal melody and *tres* continues in later examples, and if the *tresero* follows the *coro* in crotchet anticipation, it is for a specific effect rather than as a part of a continuing rhythmic duplication.

The 1920s recordings

Four examples from the late 1920s reveal both the continuing influence of the *clave* in the vocal line, particularly in this type of rhythmic, and often melodic anticipation, and the differing ways in which the *tres montuno* works with and against it. Due to a reduction in the relentless syncopation of the *tres montuno* during the 1920s, quaver anticipation was no longer an automatic feature, but again was more frequently staggered with the *coro* than the bass.[32] While the rhythmic role of the *tres* was gaining importance, its melodic role, in following or working in counterpoint with the vocal line, remained, though as with earlier *changüí* examples, there are frequent pitch clashes between *tres* and *coro*.

In Sexteto Habanero's *Aquella Boca* (Ex 2.6, CD1:5,2'25")) the *tres montuno* follows the rhythm of the melody closely, and, as in *Rosa Que Linda Eres*, the anticipation is staggered between *coro* and *tres*; this is the one point in the cycle where this rhythmic duplication is suspended. The *coro* also anticipates harmonically. I have transcribed this example following the phrasing of the *tres*; this cuts against the phrasing of the lyrics.

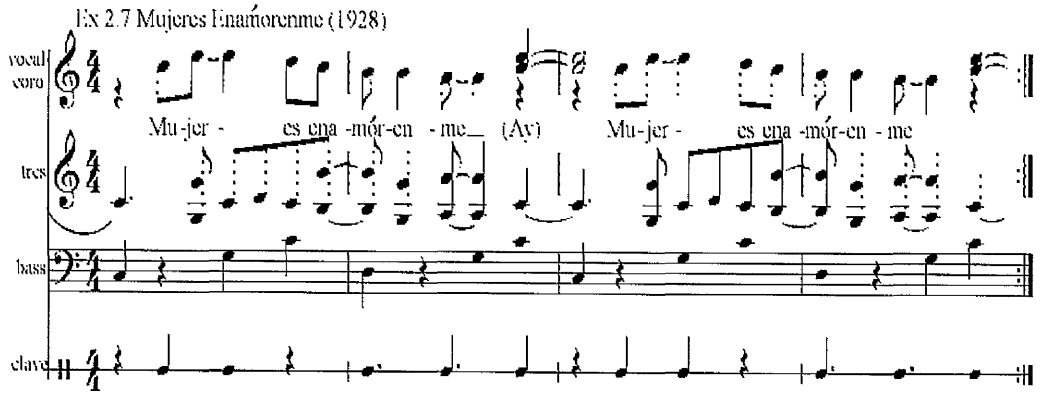
Ex 2.6 Aquella Boca (1927)



[32] The *tresillo* bass was far more common than the anticipated bass during this period: in the Tumbao compilation of twenty-four Sexteto Habanero tracks from the late 1920s, twenty two have a *tresillo* bass while only two feature any sort of bass anticipation (TCD009).

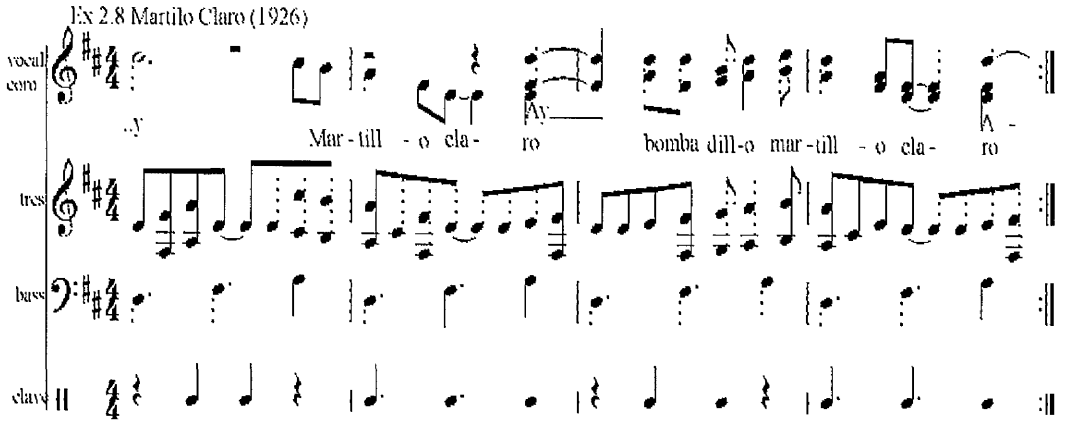
In *Mujeres Enamórenme* by the Sexteto Nacional (Ex 2.7, CD1:6, 2'01"), the *tres* moves in and out of the vocal line, duplicating it less closely than in the previous example. However, the *tresero* joins the *coro* in the anticipated crotchet beat on the three side of the *clave*, rather than waiting for the final quaver to provide a staggered anticipation. This song thus provides an early example of the *ponche*, the colloquial name for when staggered anticipation is suspended in order for all to sound the final crotchet (though in this instance the bass sounds the first beat of the next bar so the anticipation is not complete). It remains important in current salsa practice and can be accented on either side of the *clave* (Mauleón 1993:63-64).

Ex 2.7 Mujeres Enamórenme (1928)



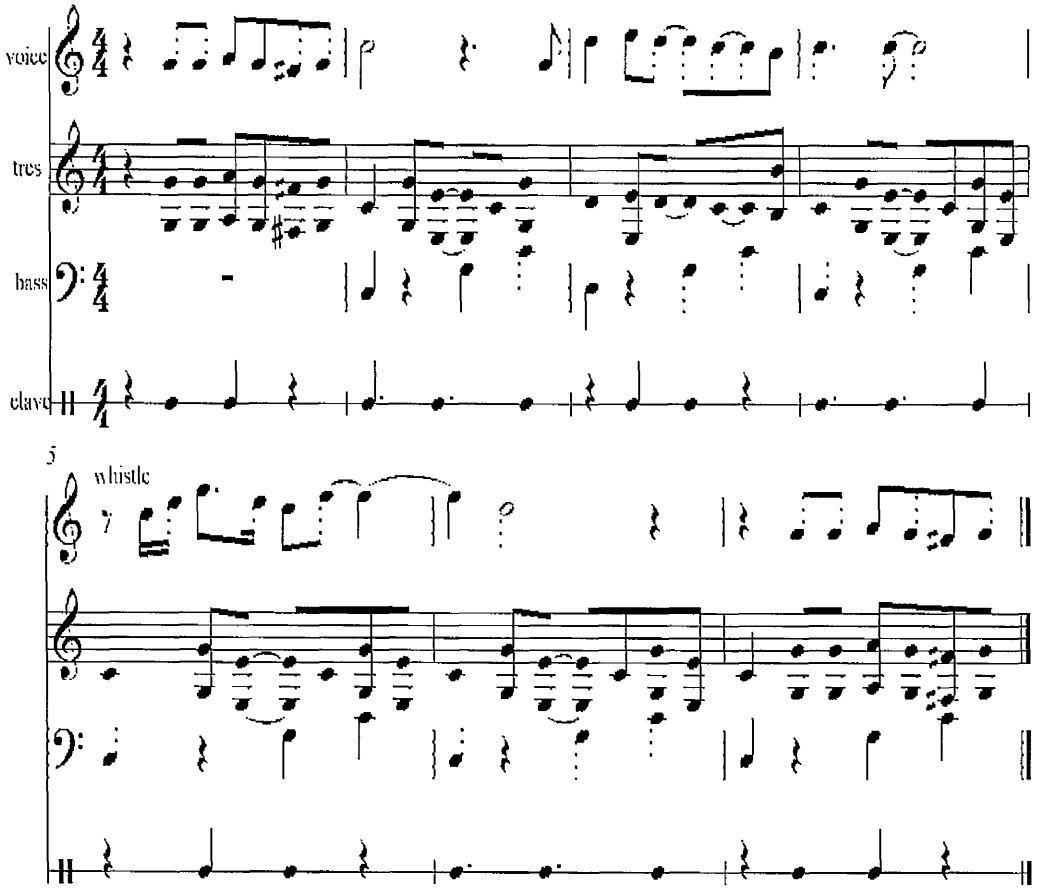
Martillo Claro from Sexteto Bologna (Ex 2.8, CD6, 2'27")) has a more even and flowing *tres montuno* in which the level of syncopation is considerably lower, with only the tied fourth and fifth quavers providing the accent that emphasises the *bombo* note. More so than the previous examples, the *tres montuno* here provides harmonic support (via arpeggiation) and counter-melodic material as well as some duplication of the melody. Although the *coro* has a crotchet anticipation on the three side of the *clave*, this is not staggered with the *tres*, as the *tresero* sounds the first beat of the next bar (as does the bass).

Ex 2.8 Martilo Claro (1926)



Unlike the two Habanero Godínez examples, these three songs have *largo* sections, which demonstrate the diminished role of the *tres* in harmonic consolidation at the end of phrases. As we saw with *changüí*, *treseros* would provide melodic statement during the *largo* section and reinforce the harmony by means of arpeggiation at the ends of phrases (*pasos de calle*) often causing an uneven phrase length as a result. In the *largo* sections of both *Aquella Boca* and *Martillo Claro*, the *tresero* provides a melodic introduction and joins the vocals in melodic statement, but there is no arpeggiation between phrases. However, in the *largo* section of *Mujeres Enamórenme* (Ex 2.9, CD1:6, 0'12") the phrase length is altered to accommodate a whistled responding phrase over extra arpeggiated statement. According to Lapidus, *pasos de calle* are a unique feature of *changüí* that are not present in *son montuno* (Lapidus 2005: 67). However, in this instance, while the extra arpeggiation is there for accompaniment purposes rather than to prepare the singer for the next phrase, the uneven phrase length that is created recalls *changüí*, and suggest that this type of phrase extension was still in use. (Uneven phrases lengths were also a reason for the inconsistent application or acknowledgement of the *clave* rhythm, even if the rhythm itself was an integral part of the melody). As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, technical and recording limitations can reduce the amount of transcription possible, and this is one instance where I have been unable, even with the help of Cuban contacts, to transcribe the lyrics.

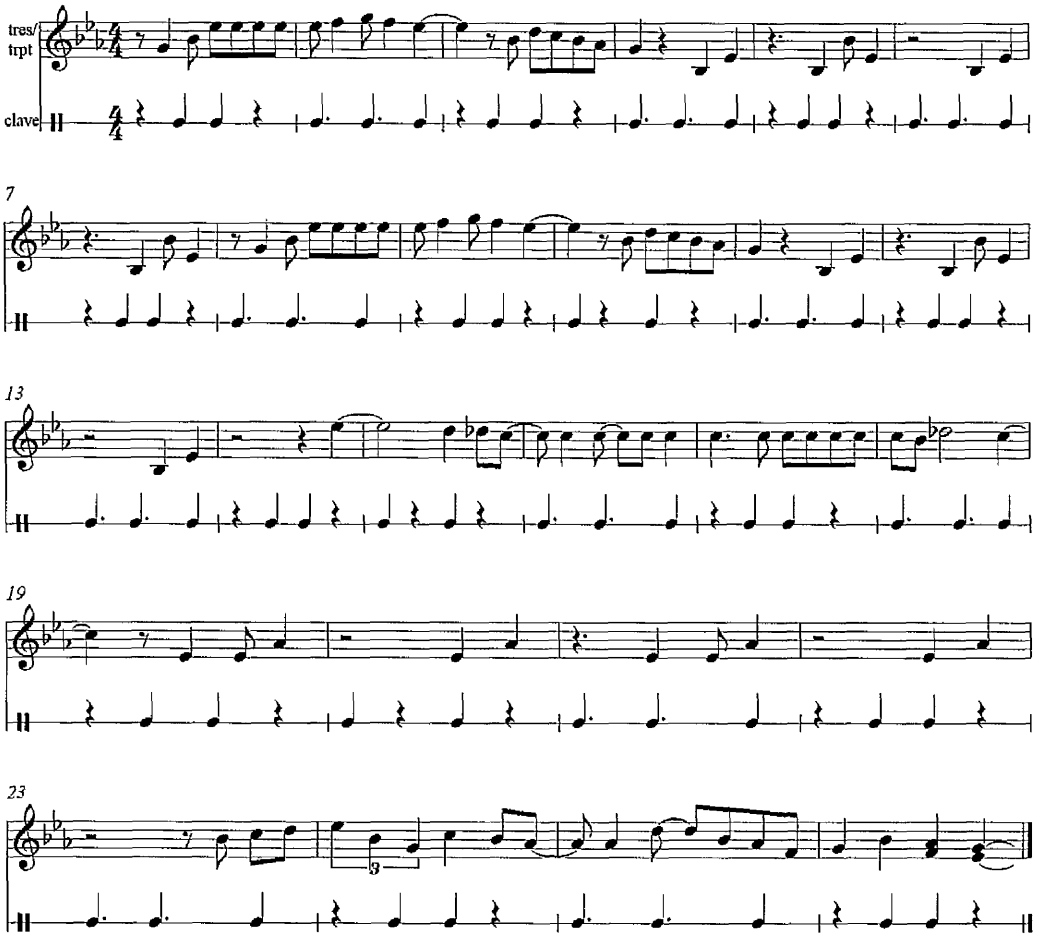
Ex 2.9 Mujeres Enamórenme (largo section)



The *largo* section of *Somos Ocho Orientales* (Ex 2.10, CD1:8, 0'09"), recorded in 1927 by Grupo Típico Oriental, shows how the *clave* rhythm was frequently ignored and how an uneven phrase length could undermine it. In one of the earliest recordings to include trumpet in the ensemble, *tres* and trumpet provide the opening melodic statement in (loose) unison and the *claves* can be heard clearly. However, the rhythmic and melodic ostinato played in between phrases, while clearly itself based on the *clave* rhythm, is undermined by the uneven phrase length of the song and by the *clave* player adding extra bars to reverse the *clave*, giving the song little sense of *clave* direction. In the first seven bar phrase, the 2:3 *clave* seems at odds with the rhythm of the melody, particularly in bars 4-7, and, because of the inclusion of a bar of straight beats (10), this disjunction is repeated (11-14). The *clave* is reversed again in bars 15 and 20, putting the melodic ostinato into *clave* for the first time (bar 21).

There is little sense here of the *clave* dictating other rhythmic patterns or relationships. In spite of the presence of the *claves*, instrumentally, and of the rhythm itself, there is no strict adherence to following the alternation of tension and release or of the instruments in the *tumbao* coinciding on specific beats, such as the *bombo*. The legacy, from *changüí* of uneven phrase lengths and arpeggiated ostinatos between phrases was still sufficiently strong in the *largo* section to overcome the pull of the *clave* rhythm. This type of uneven phrase length had largely ceased to be a feature of the genre by the 1940s.

Ex 2.10 Ocho Orientales (1927)



Summary

This small sample of recordings reveals, above all, the extent to which the *tres montuno* was in transition during the period 1918 -1931. The addition of the guitar and string bass stabilised the harmonic centre of the music and freed the *tresero* from harmonic responsibility, but this did not dramatically or immediately change the *tres montuno*. The clearer harmonic centre made more of a difference in the *largo* section, where the *tresero* no longer had to provide *pasos de calle* between phrases (though, as I show, elements of this remain in uneven phrase lengths and accompanying arpeggiation). In the *montuno* section, the *tresero* still follows the basic outline of the vocal melody, but not as strictly in *changüí* and with the beginnings of a counter-melodic element.

The addition of the *clave* rhythm was the factor that caused the most change within the newly standardised *tumbao*, altering rhythmic relationships and establishing, though not always consistently, elements that would become commonplace in later *sones*. The stressing of the *bombo* beat, a fourth crotchet emphasis, uniting on the *ponche* and staggered anticipation were all elements that came about through *clave* influence but which were not always fully developed or shared within all instruments of the *tumbao*. There is staggered anticipation, for example, but not between bass and *tres*, as would develop later, but between *coro* and *tres* while the bass remains unanticipated. Likewise, uneven phrase lengths contradict the principle of *clave*, in spite of the presence of both the rhythm and *claves* in the percussion section.

For the *tres montuno* it meant a rhythmic change from the constant syncopated arpeggiation in *changüí* to a reduced syncopation and the stressing of more specific beats within the shared ostinato of the *tumbao*. The presence of the guitar had already reduced the harmonic role of the *tres*, as the trumpet would do in terms of melody, but the dynamism produced by the rhythmic interlocking of the *tumbao* gave the *tres* a new rhythmic responsibility.

The move to a more counter-melodic *montuno* is less of a clear process, as a strong melodic element remained an important part of the *tres montuno*. Given the harmonic support of the guitar, this continuation of melodic responsibility would be expected, but there was also a move towards a greater incorporation of apreggiated harmonic elements within a melodic *montuno* and a less rigid relationship with the vocal melody. The *montunos* in *Rosa Que Linda Eres, Mujer Bandolera* and *Martillo Claro* are characterised by a much more fluid interpretation of the melody and a sense of moving in and out of its sphere, from melodic imitation to counter-melodic statement. This is also reflected rhythmically, for example in the use of staggered anticipation in *Aquella Boca*, in which rhythmic duplication between *tres* and vocals is suspended to produce as specific effect.

For the *tresero*, these transformations altered the feel of the *tumbao*, creating a more relaxed *tres montuno* in which the stressing of specific off-beats was more deliberate and placed. Staggered anticipation is a case in point: in *changüí* the *tres* was constantly syncopated and anticipating with the final quaver was a continuation of this. With the staggered anticipation here, the final quaver is much more deliberately placed, as part of a communal musical effect. Although a more syncopated and rhythmically dynamic piano *montuno* would emerge in the later *conjunto*, during this period the *tres*

(and, as we shall see in Chapter 3, the piano in an early sextet appearance in 1928) played a less rhythmically assertive and more flowing role.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the argument that the common description of the *son montuno* ensemble as a combination of African percussion and European strings is over-simplistic. While percussion traditions, both religious and secular, have historically played a strong role in the continuation of Afro-Cuban culture, there is also an African precedent for the technique and function of plucked string instruments. This is not to suggest that the *tres* is the recreation of a specific African instrument, but that in its approach to harmony creation there are parallels with that of African chordophones, including the 'African' guitar.

Tres technique, then, suggests as many African as European precedents. While the function of the *tres* as a provider of a repeated, cyclical, accompanying ostinato is accepted as an African element in *son montuno*, the way this is produced has not been studied in depth. Parallels with West African lutes, such as the Mande *koni,* in the use of movement between melodic and cyclical harmonic invention to provide an accompanying ostinato, link the instrument with a specific region of the African continent, one which, musically at least, has been virtually ignored by Cuban music scholars. In addition, the use of repeated melodic ostinati as a way of creating harmony, whether based on the continuation of chordophone techniques or on the imitation of other instrumental families, such as xylophones or lamellophones, links the *tres* to the much wider African principle of interlocking, It was this type of harmony creation, combined with the specific rhythmic structures of the *tumbao,* that became the basis for the piano *montuno.*

Examination of *changüí,* the most prominent early version of *son montuno,* confirms this view. Three aspects of *changüí* - the parallels between plucked African lutes and the *tres* in accompaniment technique and function, the creation of harmony from a melodic flow of plucked strings, and the lack of *clave* - point to the presence West African chordophone traditions in *son montuno.* This is not to deny the impact of other West and Central African traditions. It is clearly difficult to attribute, with any certainty, specific elements in a genre with such a rich cultural background, but it is possible to detect stylistic features that seem both distinct from these traditions and from those of Europe.

The 1910s and 1920s represent a second stage of development, in which practitioners of *son montuno* began to have closer contact with other Afro-Cuban styles such as *rumba.* This was a period in which crucial changes were made to the structure of *son montuno* and to individual instrumental roles. Changes to the *tumbao* - a less frenetic pace, the beginning of rhythmic and harmonic anticipation as carefully placed structural elements and a greater awareness of the *clave* rhythm - were reflected in the *tres montuno* and would have a direct bearing on the later piano *montuno.* Moreover, these changes, in which the *tres montuno* moved to a more integrated role within the *tumbao*, would give later pianists an easier model to follow in their own *montuno* construction.

Two elements - the gradual adoption of *clave* as an organising rhythmic principle (with a more deliberately placed rhythmic anticipation) and the gradual change to a more counter-melodic and

integrated *tres* ostinato with reduced dependence on the *coro* melody - were crucial in this transformation. The *tres* was now part of a shared interlocking rhythmic ostinato, with a reduced responsibility for melodic duplication, and it was this shift that pianists were able to develop and refine in later decades.

The importance of the *tres* in the development of the later *conjunto* piano style cannot be overestimated, and I have argued that it is in an Africanist interpretation of *tres* function and playing technique that we can find a clear link between specific African musical principles and techniques, and features that would later characterise the *conjunto* piano style. Parallels between the *tres* and African chordophones in plucked, percussive playing technique and in the creation of harmony from interlocking melody refute the notion of the *tres* as simply an offshoot of the European guitar. Strongly influenced by the *tres*, *conjunto* pianists were able to recreate this way of playing accompaniment patterns to create a new style in which the piano was being used very differently from the European tradition.

Chapter 3 The Piano in Cuba: from salon to dancehall

The piano has enjoyed a long history in Cuban music, firstly in the classical salon tradition and, more recently, in popular music of the theatre and dance hall. These traditions frequently overlapped, with classical piano pieces often based on popular songs, and with the gradual incorporation of the instrument into popular music ensembles. Many twentieth century classical composers wrote for both the concert hall and the dance orchestra, adapting pieces for both styles; likewise many pianists in the field of popular music were classically trained and this was reflected in their playing.

In this chapter, I bring together information on the piano from a variety of existing sources to create an overview of the piano in its transition from a solo middle class salon instrument to an essential part of the *conjunto*. I contrast the more self-conscious attempts to create a 'Cuban' or 'Afro-Cuban' piano style - in both 19th century piano works and in those contemporary with the growing popularity of *son montuno* in the 1920s and 30s - with the innovative way in which the instrument was already being used by a sextet as early as 1928, the Sexteto Gloria Cubana. This chapter should be taken in conjunction with Chapter 4, in which I explore further the role of the piano in other popular ensembles contemporaneous with the *conjunto*.

Musical nationalism amongst classical composers has received a great deal of attention from scholars, but its basic conservatism - composers used existing forms and techniques in an attempt to represent popular or folkloric idioms - has been downplayed. In presenting the works of composers such as Saumell and Cervantes (in the 19th century) and Lecuona (in the 20th), as direct precursors to *conjunto* and salsa piano, writers such as Mauleón (1999) miss the essential shift that occurred as part of the development of *son montuno*, as pianists moved from providing chordal accompaniment to accented arpeggiation and parallel motion. This change is evident even in the Gloria Cubana examples of 1928, in which imitation of the *tres* is already a feature of the piano style and chordal harmony is scarcely present. Although it might seem that the move from solo to ensemble playing in popular music could explain this shift, the lack of a precedent in other popular ensembles, such as the jazz band and *charanga* orchestra, suggests otherwise. In those ensembles, the later presence of this new approach was due the overwhelming influence of *son montuno*.

The introduction of the piano into the *son montuno* ensemble, whether alongside the *tres* and guitar or as a substitute for those instruments, can be seen as part of a wider process of musical substitution. As I mentioned in the introduction, musical substitution has been identified by Nketia as a musical practice found in much of Africa and continued strongly in the New World (Nketia 1980: 14). Seeger likewise emphasises the use of instrumental substitution within Latin America, but cautions that 'the introduction of a new instrument does not, by itself, indicate whether the resulting change is considered to be highly significant' (Seeger 2000: 79). And Blacking points out that the context of the change is crucial: if the introduction of new instruments is perceived as being part of the musical style, then the change may not represent a change in the musical system itself (Blacking 1995: 149).

In the case of the *son montuno* ensemble, the addition of the piano was preceded by the substitution of the *botija* and *marímbula* by string bass (in the early 1920s) and by the entry of the

trumpet into the ensemble in 1927. And the first consistent use of the piano also coincided with the general expansion of the ensemble in the late 1930s, with the addition of the *tumbadora* and further trumpets (see Chapter 5). There is no evidence that *soneros* considered the entry of the piano any more or less significant than these other instrumental changes.

There are, however, two reasons that make this particular instrumental substitution more significant. Firstly there was a radical change in approach to playing, in which the traditional division of musical elements between left and right hands was gradually replaced by a rhythmically identical repeated ostinato. This shift is already present to a limited extent in the 1928 Gloria Cuban recordings. Secondly, this change was preceded by an extended period of experimentation, in which 19th and 20th century classical composers tried to integrate popular elements into the classical piano repertoire. Although it is difficult to compare the role of the solo piano with the role of the instrument in an ensemble, it is important to examine these works in the light of later developments in the *conjunto*. As Blacking notes: 'Every case of musical change presupposes a historical process and a critical moment of cognitive change, but because the moment of conscious change, in which the individuals decide to move in a different direction, may have been preceded by a period of latency, in which there is a gradual feeling towards change, it may be necessary to study events related to music over a considerable period of time' (Blacking 1995: 168). The piano works of classical composers reveal the problems of trying to recreate popular forms within an essentially European idiom and hint at the need for a completely different approach to playing the instrument within popular music.

The first part of this chapter traces the presence of the piano in Cuba, from the earliest imported instruments, through its growing popularity as a drawing room instrument in middle class homes, to its gradual entry into popular styles and ensembles. Cuban composers have often used the piano in attempts to represent the notion of a distinct national identity by cultural and musical means, and growing political nationalism in the 19th century was reflected in the cultural arena. I identify the musical, often rhythmic devices that were increasingly used as a kind of musical shorthand to signify the 'national' in solo piano music in the works of composers such as Manuel Saumell and Ignacio Cervantes. With the *contradanza*, a popular nineteenth century dance of French/English extraction, and subsequently the *danza* and *danzón*, a more consciously 'Cuban' flavour was present in solo piano music (Mauleón 1999:20). This continued in the 20th century in the work of composers such as Ernesto Lecuona who, in successfully combining a career in both classical and popular music, continued and extended the use of musical devices to suggest a Cuban or, in the wake of the *afrocubanismo* movement of the 1920s, an Afro-Cuban identity.[33] This tradition of solo piano music being used as an expression of national identity has continued in the works of composers such as Harold Gramatages and Hilario González (Orovio 2004: 96, 99).

[33] The *afrocubanismo* movement, also known as the *minorista* (minority) group, was an elite artistic movement of the 1920s and 1930s in which Afro-Cuban culture was used by mainly white Cuban writers, artists and composers as raw material and inspiration.

The second part of this chapter is the study of an isolated example of the early use of the piano within a *son montuno* sextet - that of the recordings by Sexteto Gloria Cubana in 1928, from which I have transcribed selected passages. It shows that while the instrument's unique qualities were recognised and utilised, imitation of the *tres* and the continuance of the *montuno* style remained a key part of the pianist's approach. In experimenting with the piano, Sexteto Gloria Cubana was influenced by both *charanga* orchestras and Cuban jazz bands. The piano was a relatively recent addition to the jazz band but had a longer history in *danzón* and both genres provided different blueprints for maximising its strengths. However, given the association of the *tres* with the genre (and even though Gloria Cubana continued to use the *tres*) it is hardly surprising that elements of the *tres montuno* - such as arpeggiated ostinati and *pasos de calle* - are found in the piano part, and this suggests that the pianist, Maria Teresa Ovando, was aware of the possibility of transferring some of those features to the piano. This approach would be continued by *conjunto* pianists.

3.1 Salon Music and Cuban Nationalism

Much of the literature on the piano in Cuban concert music stresses the overlap between the popular and the classical, and I begin this section with an overview of the different scholarly approaches to the subject. Nohema Fernández (1989) investigates the 19th century *contradanza*, in particular those of Manuel Saumell which exemplify this overlap, while Carpentier (1947, 2001) presents the 19th century attempts at creating a 'Cuban' style as a precursor to the experimentation of 20th century composers such as Alejandro García Caturla and Amadeo Roldán.[34] Tamayo (1995) looks closely at the solo piano music of Ernesto Lecuona, and Lezcano (1991) returns to the concert works of Roldán and García Caturla in the light of recent research into African rhythmic concepts. Again, the stressing of the popular and more folkloric Afro-Cuban as important elements of Cuban classical music suggests a linear development in which these elements were seamlessly incorporated into the classical tradition.

This approach is exemplified in León (1991) in which he examines the musical nationalism of the 1920s. He argues that *minorista* composers such as Roldán and García Caturla represent the inevitable break with the immediate past in their reaction to a musically stagnant post-Independence Cuba. The 19th century nationalism of composers such as Saumell and Cervantes had been superseded by a return to a more European sound in the works of Sanchez de Fuentes and Guillermo Tomás, and vanguard composers of the 1920s were, in their appropriation and promotion of Afro-Cuban forms, reacting against this (León 1991: 270-272). In this analysis, the second wave of nationalism in the 1920s redressed the balance that had swung too far in a European direction, in a clear valorisation of Afro-Cuban culture. While building on the salon nationalism of the earlier composers, they took concert music in a new, more aggressively national direction in which Afro-Cuban elements became a more integral part of musical structures (León 1991:274).

Kramer, in his study of North American and French concert music of the 1920s and its appropriation of African American culture, sees these relationships as more problematic, and his

[34] These composers were part of the *minorista* group of avant garde artists.

analysis can equally be applied to Cuba. He argues that references to African American cultural forms in concert music function as 'a citation, framed references to a low vernacular idiom' that composers 'enclose', rather than make part of the process, in what amounts to a continuation of blackface minstrelsy (Kramer 1996:56, 57). In a parallel with the different musical paths of the Cuban *minoristas* and the more popular/ crossover composers such as Ernesto Lecuona, he includes in his analysis piano works by Charles Ives (whose *First Piano Sonata* includes elements of ragtime), Debussy (in the representation using tone clusters of bones and tambourine in *Minstrels*), and the more populist *Rhapsody in Blue* by George Gershwin.

Kramer's analysis, while specific to 20th century concert music, can equally be applied to both 19th and 20th century Cuban solo piano works. In trying to encapsulate the 'national', popular musical forms were reduced to a shortlist of typical rhythms and clichés, all of which were subservient to an essentially European idiom. At the same time, writers on Cuban classical piano imply that these popular and/or Afro-Cuban musical elements could be translated to the piano without the type of fundamental shift that took place in the role of the instrument in the *conjunto*. In presenting this incorporation as unproblematic, the literature on salon music, as with that on popular music, fails to highlight that change.

19th century salon music for piano

Keyboard instruments were present in Cuban musical life from its early days as a Spanish colony. In 1612 the first organ was installed in Santiago cathedral (then the dominant cultural city) and, as in Europe, the clavichord remained popular until being usurped by the piano in late 18th century Havana (by then the capital) (Carpentier 2001:94, 131). The first piano in Santiago in 1810 coincided with the consolidation of the French/Haitian presence, fleeing the revolution in Santo Domingo (subsequently Haiti) and bringing with them new musical and cultural practices (Carpentier 2001: 147,167; Sublette 2004:307) The learning of the piano became a sign of high social status with the rapid growth of the sugar industry at the end of the 18th century, and the 19th century saw the heyday of the piano as a drawing room instrument, with many bourgeois homes both owning an instrument and presenting musical performances and events (Carpentier 2001:167, Tamayo 1995: 82). The invention of the iron frame in 1825, with its greater guarantee of consistent tuning in a hot climate, further consolidated the instrument's position in society (Apel 1970: 672).

The status of the piano as a solo, rather than ensemble instrument, underlined by its amateur, domestic status, strengthened the demand for solo piano music. Music had been published in Cuba itself from 1803, far in advance of other countries in the region, and music for solo piano was much in demand, especially after the founding of the musical magazine *El Filarmónico Mensual* in 1812 (Carpentier 1947:370, N. Fernández 1989:119). By the end of the 19th century, the piano, while still the preferred amateur instrument, was losing some of its social cachet due to the large number imported in the wake of the American-backed government in 1899; this coincided with the entry of the piano into the field of popular music in 1898 within the first *charanga* orchestra (performing *danzón*) (Sublette 2004:307).

However, in spite of its late arrival in popular Cuban music, the piano had long been used in

concert music as a signifier for the 'popular' and 'folkloric' by Cuban classical composers, and as a way of asserting a distinctly Cuban identity. From the middle of the 19th century, with many other countries in Latin America now independent republics, or in the case of Brazil an independent monarchy, a nationalist sensibility developed in Cuba against the Spanish colonial regime and music was one of its most important manifestations. Until the mid 19th century, music-making in Cuba, as with most of the region, was controlled by the church and the beginnings of an independent musical education coincided with this more strongly nationalist outlook (Martin 1998:17). Unlike the *minoristas* in the 1920s, the desire was for a nationalistic Cuban identity, via more generalised 'folklore' or 'popular' elements, rather than any acknowledgement of Afro-Cuban presence. The vast majority of musicians, however, were Afro-Cuban, due to the preference for higher status professions among white colonists and the inherent insecurity of a career in music (Carpentier 2001: 153-154). This meant that attempts by composers to sound authentic involved trying to capture the characteristic way these musicians played.

The most important musical form of the 19th century salon was the *contradanza*, a creolised version of the English country dance, popular in the Americas from the 18th century onwards. The influx of French and Haitians to Cuba, following the Revolution in Santo Domingo, gave a new impetus to the dance which by this stage combined an elite (French) image with a more democratic and couple-orientated style of dancing (N Fernández 1989:116-117). Its musical importance lies both in its representation of the new creole sound and in its role as a structural precursor to later musical styles. The *orquesta típica* that performed *contradanzas*, and later *danzas* and *danzones*, for dancing comprised brass, woodwind, strings and percussion instruments and did not include piano (Gerard 1989:72-73). It is however the *contradanzas* for solo piano, often arrangements of sung or orchestral *contradanzas* that were published at the time and these have become the basis for the study of Cuban piano music during the 19th century.

M.V. Martínez (1992) argues that it was a lack of ambition in 19th century composers which led to the dominance of what she calls the *microforma*, the condensing of material into a small scale musical form (M.V. Martínez 1992:10-11). Certainly composers such as Manuel Saumell, Louis Gottschalk, Ignacio Cervantes and Nicolás Espadero composed a great deal for solo piano at a time when Italian operatic virtuosity and large ensembles were all the rage in Europe. There were a number of reasons for this: the demand for piano sheet music by the expanding middle classes; the shortage of larger scale professional ensembles on the island; and the difficulties of getting larger scale works performed. Opera was dominated by foreign touring companies, and a there was such a shortage of orchestral players that the first professional orchestra was not founded in Cuba until 1908 (Carpentier 1947:371, 380).[35] In spite of the operatic ambitions of composers such as Saumell and Cervantes, it is for their piano works that they are remembered (Sublette 2004:154).

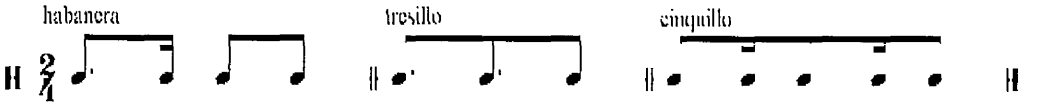
It was particularly in piano works that the obsession to 'be Cuban', and the stylised treatment of popular music, was often strongest, relying on easily recognisable external factors - such as rhythms

[35] As professional musicians were overwhelmingly Afro-Cuban, the repression following the Ladder Conspiracy (a series of slave uprisings) in the 1840s, and the new restrictions on freedom of movement of free black workers, seriously limited the availability of players (Sublette 2004: 139-140).

or quotation from popular song (M.V Martínez 1992:36). Although there was a distinction between the *contradanzas* played at dances by a variety of musical ensembles and the concert pieces, the latter owed much to the former in the two part structure - with a contrast between the lyrical opening section and more lively second - and in the use of specific rhythmic patterns (Tamayo 1995:85). While some rhythmic devices, such as the hemiola, suggested the *guajira* music of rural Cuban peasants, others, such as the use of syncopation and the *habanera, tresillo* and *cinquillo* rhythms suggested Afro-Cuban provenance.

Contradanzas were written in both 6/8 and 2/4 but the majority were in duple time, as were three of their most characteristic rhythms, the *habanera, tresilllo* and *cinquillo*.[36] The *habanera* rhythm, also know as the *ritmo de tango,* was found throughout the Caribbean in the 19th century, being first used in published *contradanzas* in 1803 (Sublette 2004:132-133, Carpentier 2001:98). In piano works, it became very common in left hand bass and accompaniment patterns, for example in *La Valentina* by Tomás Buelta y Flores, Saumell's *Los Ojos de Pepa* or, more consistently in Gottchalk's *Ojos Criollos* (reproduced in León 1974: 238; Mauleón 1999: 20; Sublette 2004: 151). The *tresillo* rhythm was formed by tying the second and third notes of the *habanera* and, likewise, became the basis for left hand accompaniment patterns (also in *Ojos Criollos*) as early as 1840 and in the *danzas* of Ignacio Cervantes, such as *Danza Cubana* and *La Carcejada* (reproduced in Mauleón 1999: 21-22). Both these rhythms were confined to an accompanying role, suggesting that one of their functions was the representation of an ongoing percussion section, but without regular repetition they were never a consistent rhythmic presence.

Ex 3.1 Characteristic 19th century rhythms



The most important rhythmic cell was the *cinquillo*, due to its long, and continuing, association with *danzón*. It emerged in the Oriente of Cuba from the *cocoyé* dance brought to Cuba by Haitians, first in Santiago and, in the second part of the century in Havana (Sublette 2004:134). Like the *habanera*, this rhythm is found throughout the Caribbean in popular musical forms such as the Puerto Rican *bomba* and Haitian *meringue* (Orovio 2004:53). Unlike the other two rhythmic cells, the *cinquillo*, which in a *danzón* ensemble is played as part of the rhythm section (usually by *guiro*), has also been used in the melodic construction of both orchestral and solo piano pieces.

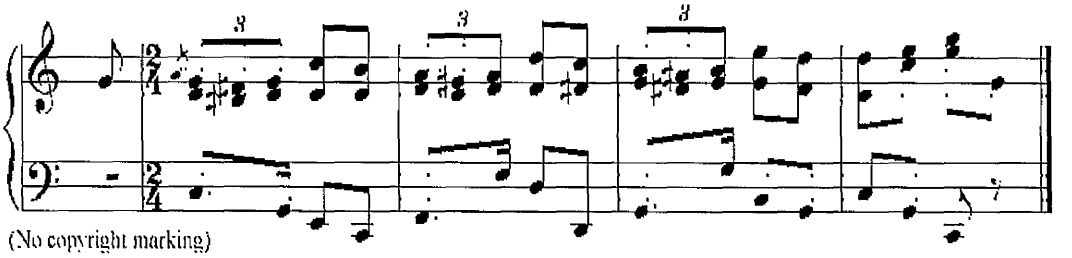
Both the *tresillo* and *cinquillo* became most commonly found as part of a two part rhythmic structure in which the 'strong' rhythm (*tresillo* or *cinquillo*) contrasted with a 'weak', less syncopated part, most famously in the *clave* rhythm, but also in the alternation of the *cinquillo* with four quavers, known as the *banqueato* (see ex 1.4) (Mauleón 1993:51, 85). This was less in evidence in 19th *danzones*, in which the *cinquillo* is used in a more haphazard fashion; the *banqueato* in Valenzuela's *El*

[36] There was a resurgence in the use of 6/8 in later 19th century *danzas*, in which the second section was played in 6/8 (Pérez 1986:93).

Negro Bueno (from the 1880s), for example, is broken in the fifth bar by a repetition of the *cinquillo* (reproduced in Leymarie 2002:23).

According to Nohema Fernández, one of the greatest achievements of Manuel Saumell (1817-1870) was the incorporation of Afro-Cuban rhythms in the way that they were performed, and this included rhythms that were neither strictly binary nor ternary, and that were difficult to notate using established Western notation (N Fernández 1989:121). Carpentier writes that Saumell often added the direction *con sandunga*, translated as 'with funky grace' presumably to denote this type of rhythmic flexibility (Carpentier 2001: 192). The *tresillo,* for example, was frequently notated as a crotchet triplet and, in some cases as a minim and two crotchets, relying on a musician's familiarity with the genre. Saumell was not the only composer to use rhythm in this way. Two piano arrangements of orchestral *contradanzas* show a similar rhythmic flexibility. In Enrique Guererro's *Juan Quiñones,* a quaver triplet in the right hand coincides with a dotted quaver and semiquaver in the left in the very first bar, while in *Llámame Casera* (composer unknown, arranged by José Urbizu), a right hand *cinquillo* is set against a left hand crotchet triplet in bar 7 (reproduced in León 1974: 243, 255). In both cases it would be practically impossible to play the rhythms accurately as written, suggesting that the rhythms are to be interpreted flexibly. Fernández argues that this was a type of shorthand, understood by musicians, for rhythms that were in between these patterns, the ambiguous triplet 'feel' that was characteristic of Afro-Cuban religious music and emerging secular styles such as *rumba* (N. Fernández 1989: 127-128). In this there are parallels with the 'swing' stylistic instruction in jazz, in which rhythm written in duple time is to be interpreted as ternary.

Ex 3.2 Juan Quiñones



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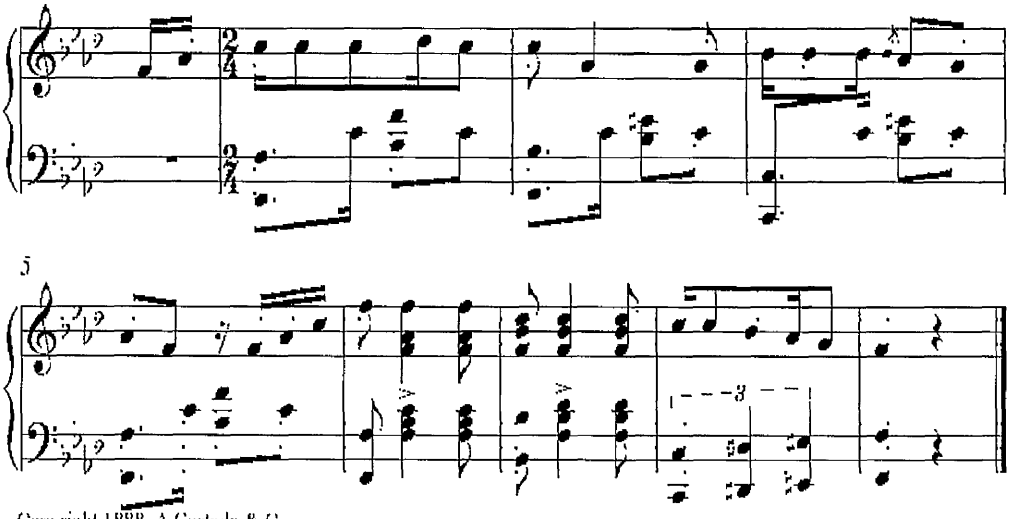
Ex 3.3 Llamame Casera



Whether in rhythmic ambiguity or in the adoption of specific rhythmic patterns, there was not in these pieces a 'rhythmic constant' as Carpentier notes with reference to the *danzas* of Cervantes (Carpentier 2001:212). The music was representing a 'feel' or style that was produced by Cuban musicians in their performance of popular dances, rather than trying to literally reconstruct popular or folkloric music itself. Moreover, the solo piano was representing an ensemble and was thus being used to present a composite of all the rhythmic patterns present in an ensemble piece. For Robin Moore, the *contradanzas* of the 19th century remain 'essentially European in terms of their overall sound' (1997:117).

The Second Wave of Nationalists

Like the folklore-influenced 19th century composers, the second wave of nationalists, multi-genre musicians such as Ernesto Lecuona and the more classical *minoristas* of the 1920s, were keen to incorporate the national into their concert works. In contrast to the previous generation, this now openly included, and indeed concentrated on, the specifically Afro-Cuban, which, under the influence of the musicologist Fernando Ortiz and with the growing international popularity of *son montuno*, had become of interest to the intellectual community (Moore 1997: 115-116, 125-126). While political repression against overt displays of Afro-Cuban culture continued, there was a growing recognition of its contribution to Cuban national culture and this was reflected in the concert hall (Sublette 2004: 370). Composers such as Amadeo Roldán and Alejandro García Caturla, attempted to combine influences from European music, such as atonal harmony and tone clusters, with the use of specific rhythms and rhythmic ambiguity, in order to try and represent the rhythmic complexity of communal Afro-Cuban music (Tamayo 1995:115). At the same time Ernesto Lecuona embraced both popular and concert music in a career similar to that of George Gershwin in the United States. He had considerable success in both fields and, as a virtuoso pianist himself, many of his best known works are for piano.

However, there was also a tendency among these concert composers to see Afro-Cuban culture as 'raw material' for more formally constructed works. Caturla described it thus: 'The living folklore... should be polished until the crudities and exterior influences fall away' (quoted in Read 1982:211). This quote reveals a contradictory attitude to popular and folkloric culture that *minoristas*, in spite of their appropriation of popular forms such as in Roldán's *Motivos del Son* or García Caturla's *Suite Bembé* and *La Rumba*, brought to their work. It also echoes the views of Fernando Ortiz, who considered Afro-Cuban arts to be a potential source of inspiration for 'universal' art (Moore 1994: 46).

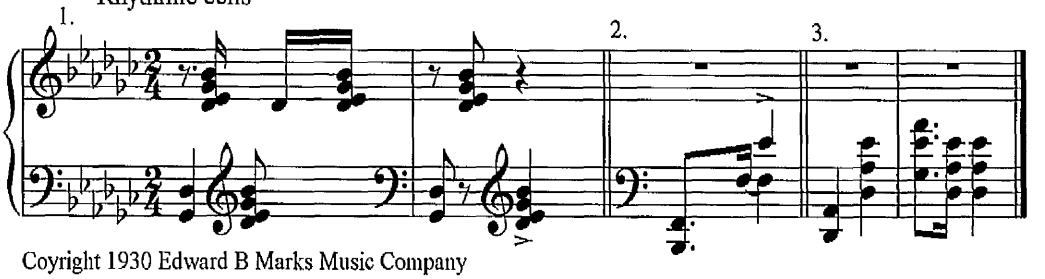
A hierarchy is also present in the literature on this musical movement, in which the influence of folklore is given greater prominence that that of the popular. Lezcano, in an article on African-derived elements in the work of Roldán and Caturla, describes staggered accentuation, syncopation, additive rhythms, the silent downbeat and metric modulation (the shifting of the downbeat within a rhythmic cell) and rightly traces these elements to African sources, but omits to mention their regular use in popular Cuban music of the period (Lezcano 1991: 173-186). Likewise, writing about Ernesto Lecuona's *No Puedo Contigo*, a solo piano piece published in 1929, Tamayo argues that the regular accentuation of the dominant on the fourth crotchet of every bar is there to reinforce the tonic pedal and ignores the stressing of the fourth beat in genres such as *rumba* (on the *tumbadora*) and *son montuno* (in the growing use of an 'anticipated' bass) both of which would have been known to Lecuona (1995:103).

Ernesto Lecuona

While composers such as Roldán and García Caturla wrote many of their works for orchestral ensembles, Lecuona continued the 19th century tradition of trying to encapsulate the essence of Cuban music within solo piano works. Influenced by European composers such as Debussy and Ravel, he also kept his link with popular music, often creating piano pieces from his songs (Tamayo 1995:88-89). Although continuing with the basic *contradanza* two-part structure, created by Saumell and Cervantes,

with the right hand supplying the melody to a left hand accompaniment, Lecuona extended it considerably. He used rhythmic cells in a more versatile way, sharing patterns between left and right hands, and made much greater use of counterpoint in order to create a more polyphonic structure (Tamayo 1995:90-96). Rhythmic ostinati became more consistent: in his 1930 piece *Danza de los Ñañigos* for example, (whose title refers to the masked dancers of the Afro-Cuban *abakua* secret society), the first rhythmic cell continues for 20 bars before any radical change, the second for 16 bars and the third for 16 bars (Ex 3.4). He also represents the improvisatory nature of Afro-Cuban music by using the repetition of phrases in different registers over a rhythmically constant left hand to suggest a musical stream of consciousness (Tamayo 1995:97-106).[37]

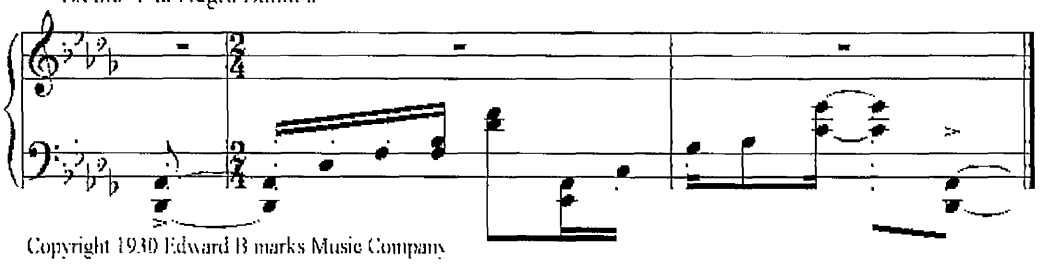
Ex 3.4 Danza de los Ñañigos
Rhythmic cells



Established rhythms such as the *habanera* and *cinquillo* continued to be the basis of many of Lecuona's works (for example in Afro-Cuban themed *La Conga de Medianoche,* 1930, *La Mulata* 1943) but there is a greater, and again more consistent use of a two-part rhythmic cell, alternating a syncopated with a non-syncopated pattern. This could be with established rhythms such as the *banqueato* (*Danza Lucumi* 1903, *La Comparsa* 1929) or with a rhythm based on the bell pattern of *conga de comparsa* parade music in *Danza Negra* (1934). *Y la Negra Bailaba* (1930) features a rhythmic cell that ties over the fourth beat to a silent first beat at the beginning of the next bar (every two bars) as part of an asymmetrical rhythmic pattern (Ex 1.5). Unlike the accenting of the fourth beat in every bar in *No Puedo Contigo,* which echoes *rumba* and the anticipated bass of *son montuno*, the rhythmic pattern here incorporates the two-part structure of the *clave* in stressing only the final beat of the second (*tresillo*) part of the rhythm. As I showed in the previous chapter, the stressing of this beat was common in 1920s *son montuno*, not only in the bass and percussion but in vocal and other instrumental parts.

[37] I have taken these musical examples from Lecuona's *Danzas Afrocubanas* (1996: 83-112).

Ex 3.5 Y la Negra Bailaba



However, in spite of Lecuona's solid knowledge of Cuban and Afro-Cuban popular music, the piano works are still an attempt to represent a communal, often percussive musical activity on a solo instrument. The instrument, in spite of Lecuona's innovations, was still being used in the traditional tune-and-accompaniment style of the 19th century and Afro-Cuban music was, to a large extent, still being reduced to its rhythms and their representation and use as a basis for the compositional process. Lecuona's *Danzas Afrocubanas,* like his *Suite Andalucía,* present local colour within an established European compositional style.

Summary

Cuban classical composers in the 19th and early 20th centuries were trying to achieve the impossible. Without a fundamental change in the way that the instrument was played, they could only hope to evoke the atmosphere or flavour of Cuban popular or folkloric forms, by using established musical clichés within a European format. According to Maria Victoria Martínez, ' "To be Cuban" represents for the composer, being able to identify the score in a clear way with some genre of Cuban popular traditional music, with a quote from a song, the presence of a rhythm, that is to say using easily recognisable external signs' (1992: 36-37).[38] Although many composers of popular music used similar musical clichés for much the same reasons, their use was less self conscious; for classical composers, the pursuit of the 'national' remained within a European format.

3.2 The earliest recordings of the piano in *son montuno*

The first consistent steps towards the integration of the piano into the *son* ensemble came during the 1930s: Septeto Cuba used the instrument in 1933, played by Armando des Torres (Orovio 2004: 61); Sexteto Miquito, the forerunner of Conjunto Casino, included the pianist '*El Diablo Rojo*' (Enrique Rodríguz) from 1935; and Sonora Matancera initially had Pérez Prado on the piano from 1936 (José Reyes interview 28.4.04). Due to a gap in recording during the first part of the 1930s (to be discussed in the next chapter) we have little idea of how the instrument was used during this period. However, there is one very early recording of the piano in a *son montuno* sextet, the Sexteto Gloria Cubana who recorded four songs with piano in 1928 and these, while an isolated example, can give us an insight into the early development of a piano style.

[38] Ser cubano representa para el compositor identificar la partitura de modo visible con algun género de la música popular tradicional, con la cita de un canto, la presencia de un ritmo, es decir, através de síntomas externos fácilmente reconocibles.

In this section I analyse the four songs recorded in 1928: *Abom Aré, Los Marineros, El Pelotero* and *Mi Amor*. These recordings have not been released commercially on CD and José Reyes of the Museu de la Música in Havana, who had transferred them from 78 records, gave me copies. Of course one cannot generalise from a small sample of one group and four songs, and any conclusions must be tentative. However, in the absence of any early *conjunto* recordings, it is worth studying these recordings for an insight into later developments.

Another caveat is that the role of the piano within this ensemble was that of an addition to the *sexteto* format rather than a member of an expanded *conjunto*. Without the change in ensemble balance and individual instrumental function, brought about by the addition of conga and extra trumpets and by amplification of the voice, the piano would not necessarily be featured in the same way as in later *conjuntos*. However, even within the sextet format there are glimpses of what would later become a *conjunto* piano style.

What I argue from this analysis is that the piano had a variety of functions within the ensemble, many of them based on imitation - of the *tres*, trumpet or voice. This is often a solely melodic function but no one role predominates or is consistently followed. Rather, constant movement between different functions characterises the piano part, echoing the use of the piano in *danzón* at this time (see Chapter 4). This lack of a clear role is not confined to the piano and is also a feature of other instruments; the *tresero*, for example, both strums and plucks the instrument and provides harmonic and rhythmic support, melodic statement and counter-melody.

The analysis provides evidence of how the piano was integrated into the ensemble, not as a substitute for the *tres,* which remained in the Gloria Cubana sextet, but as an additional instrument. I show that the piano part was to a large extent based on imitation of the *tres*, but that a new role was also being created, influenced by other instruments and styles. And, given the later influence of jazz in the 1930s, this analysis reveals how much of what became the *conjunto* piano style was already present, and how much was based on later jazz models.

The 1928 Sexteto Gloria Cubana recordings

Sexteto Gloria Cubana was founded in 1924 by *trovador* Feliciano García and his wife María Teresa Ovando, who had earlier performed together as a duo. The initial line-up comprised bass, *bongó*, hand percussion, *tres*, guitar and piano (played by María Teresa) and by the time these four songs were recorded in 1928 a trumpet had been added, though they carried on using the title of sextet (Diaz Ayala 2002; Sección 02G:1061). According to José Reyes the *tres* was frequently strummed in this sextet and this is borne out by the absence of a plucked *tres* in two of the recordings: *Abom Aré* and *Los Marineros* (Interview 28.4.04).

Structurally all four songs adhere to the *largo/montuno* structure, with some variation. All contain an instrumental introduction, a verse, either sung or instrumental, and an open-ended *montuno* section. Within the *montuno* section, *coro*/solo voice alternation is more common than alternation between *coro* and solo trumpet; moreover, trumpet improvisation is not confined to specific moments - such as an instrumental solo or within the call and response section - and the trumpeter often freely

improvises underneath the vocals. For the piano, this freedom translates into a more fluid role where no one musical function predominates.

The advent of electronic recording in 1925 had improved reproduction considerably, but, given the continuing recording restrictions, it is still very difficult to hear the piano clearly on these recordings (Sublette 2004: 362-363). The group would have been recorded using just one microphone, blurring the individual parts and making a clear balance difficult to maintain (José Reyes interview: 23.4.04). The piano cuts through the instrumental fabric when played in a high register or in a solely instrumental section, but the prominence of the vocals often masks the instrumental activity behind. In the first two songs of the recording - *Abom Aré* and *Los Marineros* - the *tres* is strummed, making the piano easier to pick out; in the second two - *El Pelotero* and *Mi Amor* - the *tres* is plucked and this further interferes with the audibility of the piano. As with many of the recordings of Arsenio Rodríguez fifteen years later, the *tres* is more dominant than the piano and cuts through much more clearly. In the work of Arsenio this was balanced out by the frequency of virtuoso piano solos; here, particularly in *El Pelotero*, the piano remains inaudible for long passages.

What is clear from an analysis of these songs is that the piano was not brought to the ensemble for one particular role, but that from the start the pianist moved easily between melodic, harmonic and rhythmic functions, sometimes concentrating on one area and sometimes combining more than one. Traditional classical piano technique, in which the right and left hands have different functions, is present; there are, for example, instances of bass in the left hand and harmonic support - chordal or arpeggiated - in the right hand. However, much of the time the pianist plays in octaves, in a melodic or counter-melodic role and the instrument is treated as a solo melodic instrument rather than as a harmonic one. This parallel motion of the hands in octaves is something that would become a strong feature of *conjunto* piano playing but here it is a technique used for melodic reinforcement rather than the strengthening of rhythmic ostinatos.

In these songs the piano often provides the melody, reflecting the influence of *danzón*, which as an instrumental genre gave greater melodic responsibility to the piano. And, as well as providing melodic statement in the introduction and *largo*, the piano even extends its melodic responsibility to join the trumpet in call and response in the *montuno* section.

This solo melodic statement by the piano in the *montuno* section, particularly as part of a call and response, was not a feature of the *conjunto* piano, although pianists sometimes continued to double the vocal melody within the *montuno*. In *conjunto* recordings of the early 1940s there was still little that was firmly fixed about the role of the piano, but in the *montuno* section the emphasis was on harmony and rhythm in the form of the piano *montuno*, even if the vocal melody was incorporated within it. This may simply have been a practical measure as, with a larger trumpet section, a conga and amplified voices, it would be much more difficult for the pianist to be heard in a melodic role, but it also reflects the way that the piano *montuno* was developing. In the Gloria Cubana songs, by contrast, there is considerable freedom for the pianist to move between melodic or counter-melodic statement and a more *montuno*-type figure.

Abom Aré

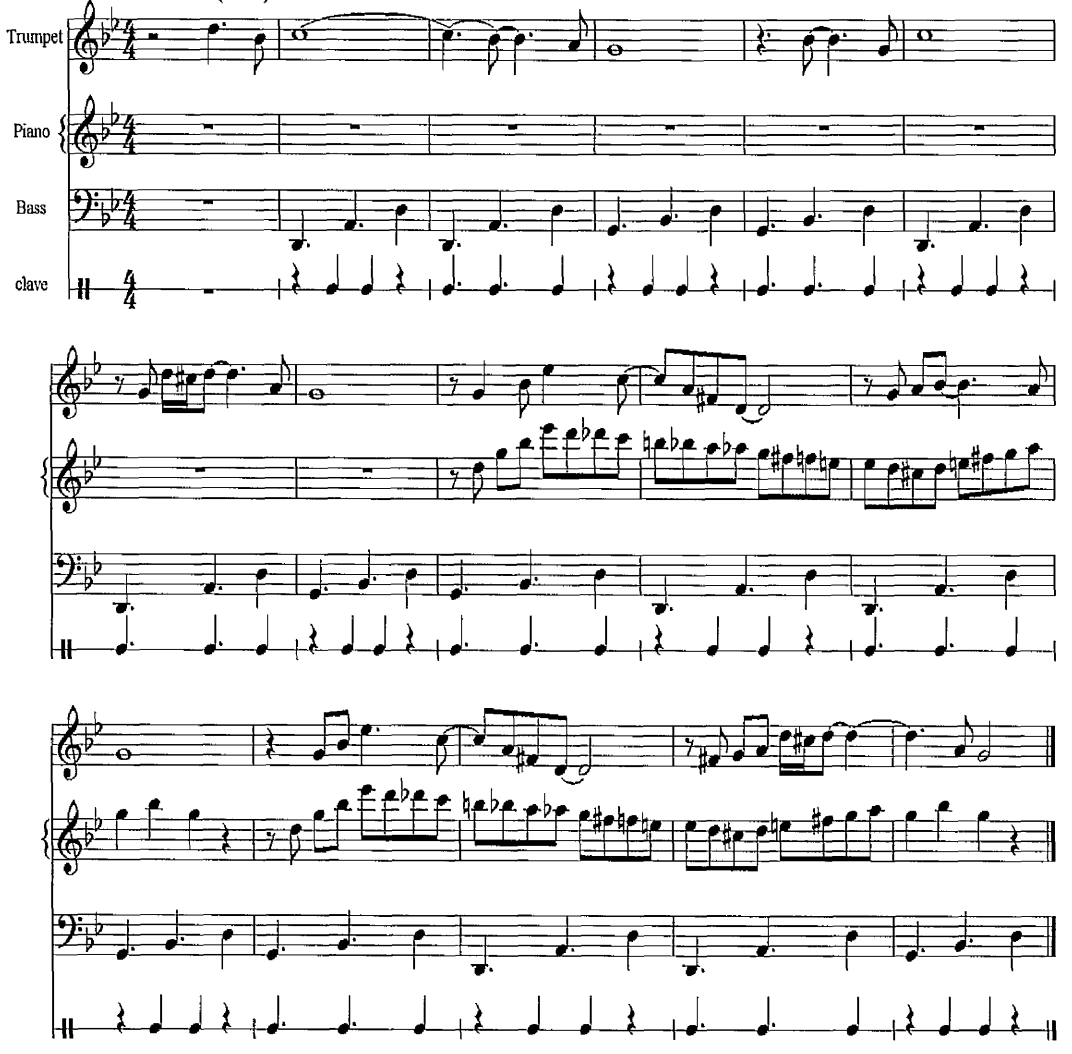
The first song in the recording is *Abom Aré,* written by Feliciano García, the director of the group. It has the basic structure of introduction, *largo* and *montuno* section, with the *son clave* in 3:2 in the *largo,* changing to 2:3 in the *montuno* with an increase in tempo. The *montuno* section itself consists almost entirely of *coro*/solo vocal alternation with just one trumpet/*coro* alternation. Following the initial statement of the *montuno* melody, the trumpeter (Alfredo García) is not used as a soloist; instead he joins the solo voice in alternating with the *coro*, improvising around the tune as if the voice were not present.

The piano is featured strongly from the outset. It starts the three-bar introduction, one bar before the bass, *tres* and *bongó*, with an arpeggiated harmonic figure. In the *largo* section the piano moves onto an elaborated version of the melody played in the upper range which, while following the melody fairly faithfully, also includes extra features such as a prolonged trill in the second bar. As I mentioned above, the *tres* is strummed in this song, freeing the piano from needing to provide harmonic support.

It is in the *montuno* section where Ovando reveals that the piano's role in this song goes beyond simple melodic elaboration. The repeated *tumbao* is a four bar phrase, of two bars dominant and two bars tonic, but the *coro* melody is structured in two 8-bar sections. Moreover, although the 16 bar sequence is structured melodically as two call and response sections, the trumpeter, solo vocalist or *coro* complete the entire sequence before any response. Possibly as a result of this, the piano part is more structured than in the other songs.

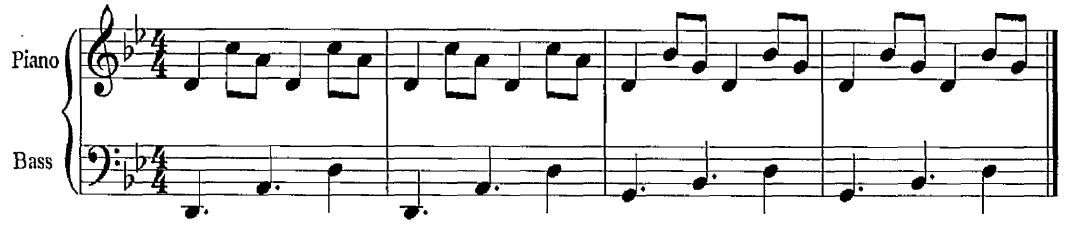
Initially the piano in the first 8-bar section is very hard to hear, but in the second eight bars Ovando switches to a descending chromatic melody, which cuts through more clearly and is played consistently for all repetitions. Although it follows the contours of the trumpet melody, it is functioning as a counter-melody and provides a contrast at a higher pitch to the trumpet. In this transcription of the first playing of the 16 bar sequence (Ex 3.6, CD1:9, 0'45"), the *coro* and solo vocalist are silent and the trumpet plays an elaborated version of the vocal melody. The *clave* is 2:3 and this is reflected in the shape of the piano countermelody, in particular the three crotchets in bars 12 and 16. I have omitted the piano part from the first 8-bar section, as it is virtually inaudible at this point in the song. What is also not clear from the recording is the role of the piano's left hand; the counter-melody is not played in octaves and nothing else is audible.

Ex 3.6 Abom Aré (1928) Part of montuno section



In later repetitions of the first 8-bar section, the piano cuts through the harmonic fabric more clearly with an arpeggiated harmonic figure, based, in imitation of the *tres*, around three notes with a dominant pedal, again with only the right hand being audible (Ex 3.7, CD1:9, 1'39").

Ex 3.7 Abom Aré (1928) Piano montuno (right hand) and bass



Thus, even within the *montuno* section, the piano shifts between melodic, counter-melodic and harmonic roles. In this sense imitation of the *tres* in the *largo* section, more than the *montuno*, is a starting point for the piano in this song. A combination of melodic statement and arpeggiated harmony, and fluid movement between the two, was a feature of the *tres* in *changüi* and later in songs such as *Mujeres Enamórenme* (Ex 2.9) particularly before the trumpet joined the ensemble and reduced its melodic role. The piano here is closer to this freer *tres largo* style than to both the *tres montuno* and to later, more consistent, *conjunto* models in which the piano *montuno* comprises a fixed, if varied ostinato.

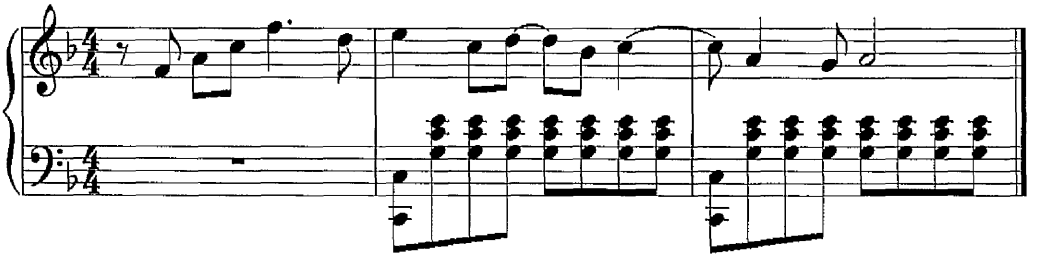
In this instance, imitation of the type of dual role exemplified by the *tres* is amplified by the use of the piano, and Ovando makes full use of the instruments unique qualities. The flowing chromatic descending melody, which would be very difficult to execute smoothly on the *tres*, adds a slightly dissonant feel to what is straightforward dominant/tonic harmony. With the greater range of the instrument, this type of figure, played at a high register, could cut through the texture without needing the use of octaves or a heavier chordal structure. However, while this type of melodic contribution was possible in an expanded sextet, it would not survive amplification and the further ensemble growth. The development of the *conjunto* piano represents a move away from this type of melodic role to a more harmonic/rhythmic function.

Los Marineros

The second song on the recording is *Los Marineros*, written by Inocente Betancourt, the group's *bongosero*. Again the structure is the basic introduction, *largo* and *montuno*, with the *clave* changing from 3:2 to 2:3 for the *montuno* section. And, as with *Abom Aré*, the role of the piano shifts throughout, encompassing melodic statement, chordal accompaniment, a piano *montuno*-type figure and alternating melodically with the trumpet in call and response.

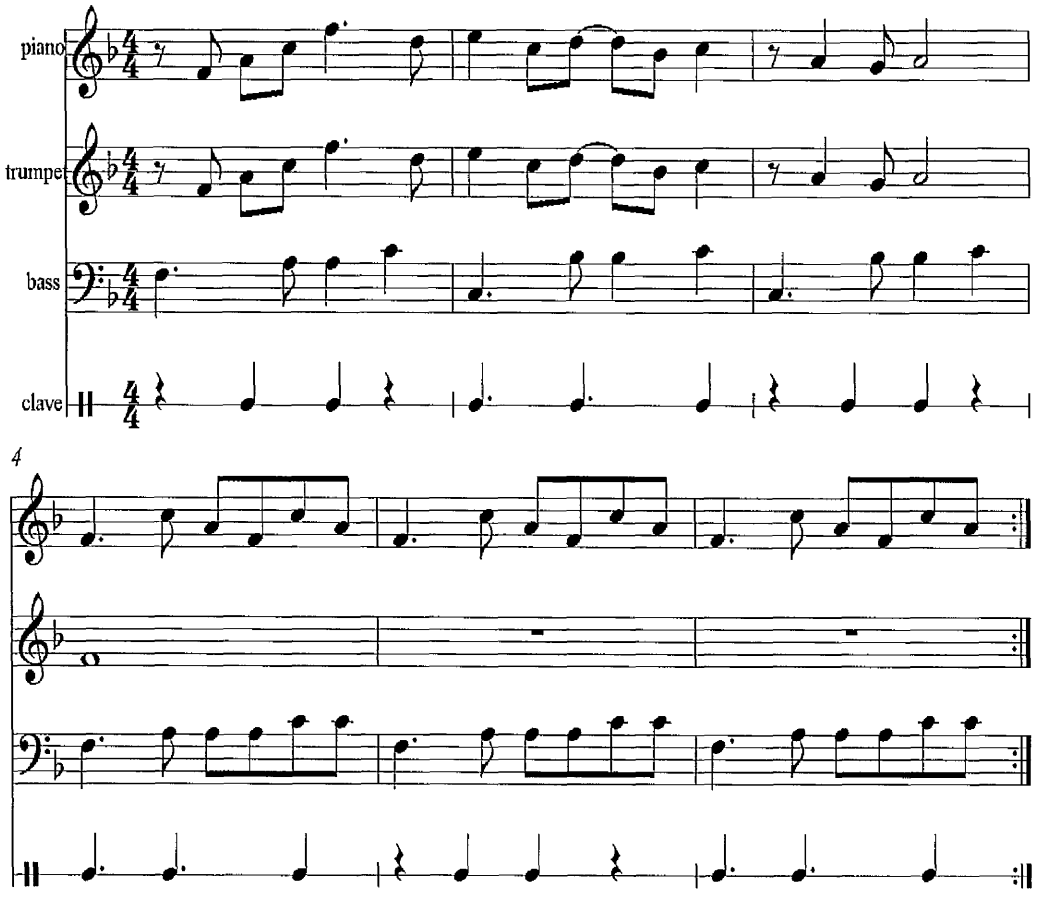
In the introduction the piano provides a lead-in for the other members of the ensemble with a short solo right hand statement of the melody, with the left hand supplying a bass and chords accompaniment. The bass and percussion join in the fourth bar (Ex 3.8, CD1:10).

Ex 3.8 Los Marineros (1928) Piano introduction



In the *largo* section the piano is now joined by the trumpet for the first statement of the verse melody. Alternating melodic statement and arpeggiated motifs between phrases, the piano part is strongly reminiscent of the *tres* role in *changüí*, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, performed this type of harmonic re-establishment (*pasos de calle*) at the end of melodic phrases, contributing to an uneven phrase length. The *tres* is again strummed to provide harmonic support (Ex 3.9, CD1:10, 0'11").

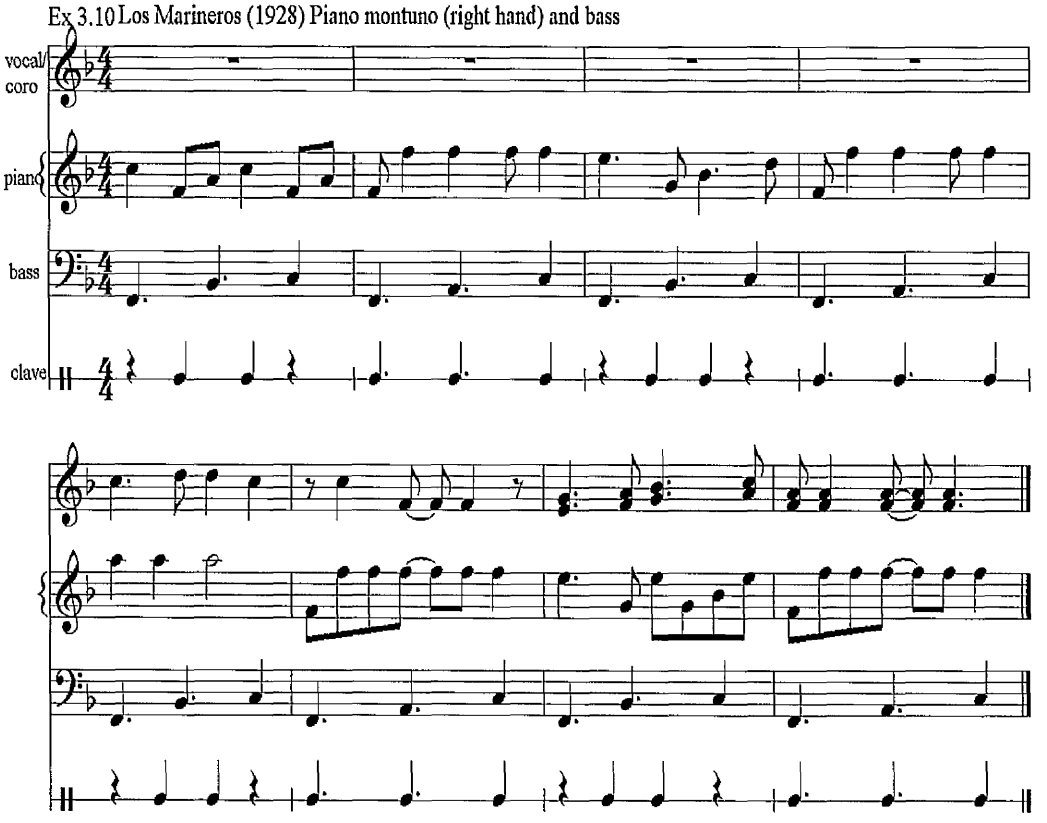
Ex 3.9 Los Marineros (1928)



Moving into the *montuno* section, the piano's multiple roles become even clearer (Ex 3.10, CD1:10, 2'16"). At the start of this section, Ovando seems about to be embarking on a harmonically static arpeggiated figure, again based around three notes (bar 1 of the transcription) but this soon changes to a figure that forms the basis for a type of counter-melodic piano *montuno* from bar 2. This figure is harmonically ambiguous. It takes place over a tonic pedal, first established in the *largo* section (beneath tonic, subdominant and dominant harmony) and continuing in the *montuno* under a tonic/dominant axis. The piano figure generally moves to the dominant (bars 3, 7, 9) but sometimes

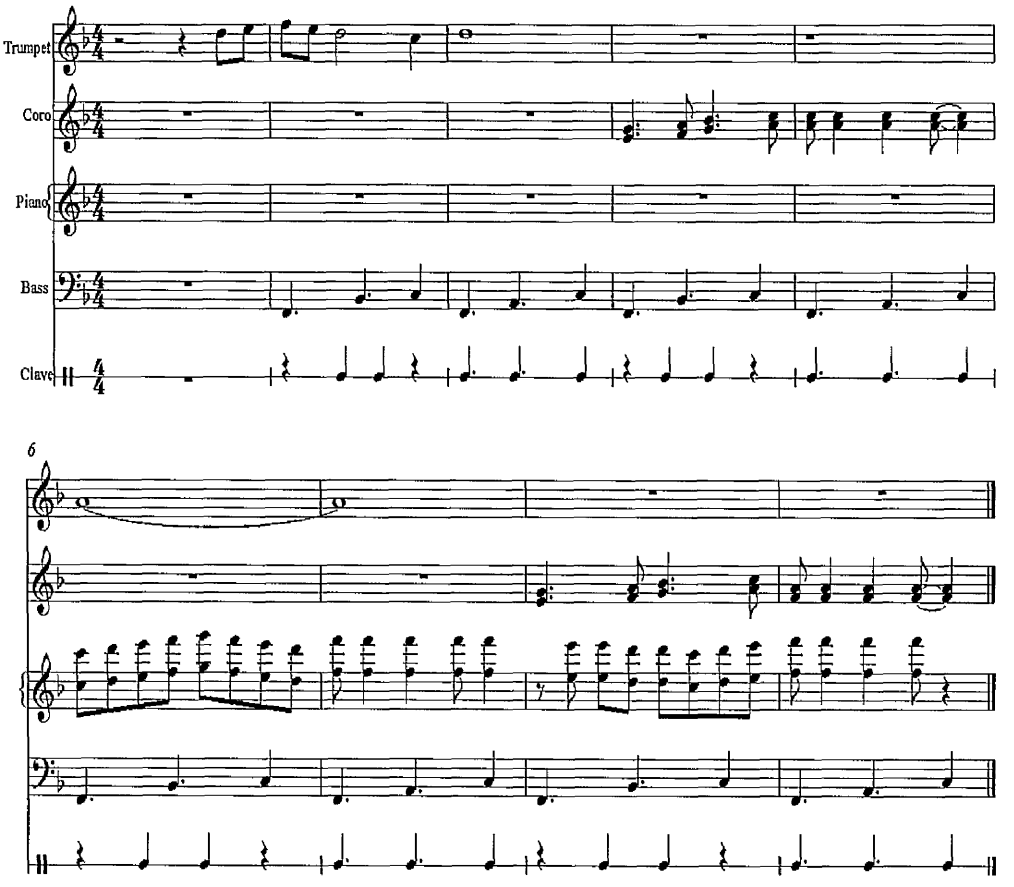
implies the tonic, (the A natural in bar 5). Due to recording restrictions, the lyrics are inaudible in this section.

Ex 3.10 Los Marineros (1928) Piano montuno (right hand) and bass



Later in this section this *montuno* is abandoned and Ovando joins the call and response. Trumpet and piano alternate with each other and the *coro* responds to each in turn - trumpet, *coro*, piano, *coro*. The trumpet has the first melodic statement, answered by the *coro* and the piano responds with another melodic figure in octaves. This clearly implies a dominant/ tonic harmony but the trumpet's pedal A natural, echoing the earlier piano figure, once more destabilises the harmonic centre. Again, the *coro* lyrics are inaudible (Ex 3.11, CD1:10, 2'38") .

Ex 3.11 Los Marineros (1928) Piano, trumpet, coro alternation



As with *Abom Aré,* this *montuno* section offers an example of the diversity of piano roles, contrasting with the more consistent use of the instrument in the *conjunto*, in which, in particular, pianists were not included in call and response in a melodic capacity. The piano moves between providing the melody within call and response, a more harmonic ostinato and a counter-melodic *montuno,* which in some repetitions contributes to the harmonic instability of the *tumbao.* This movement echoes the multiple roles of the *tres* in the *sextetos* but is taken a step further in that the melodic alternation is with both trumpet and *coro*. And, as with the chromatic counter-melody in *Abom Aré*, a more flowing type of melodic line is in evidence, better suited to piano than *tres* and displaying the instrument's unique qualities.

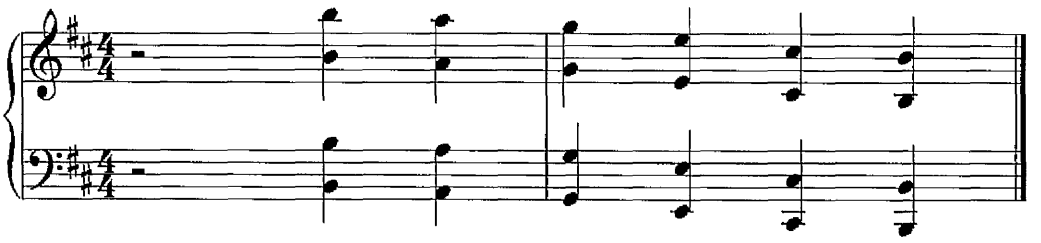
El Pelotero* and *Mi Amor

The other two songs on the recording feature the *tres* in its traditional plucked role and, as a result of the latter's greater prominence, the piano part is considerably harder to hear. *El Pelotero* (Feliciano García) features a plucked counter-melody from the *tres* in the largo section and a *tres montuno* thereafter. The piano appears to be playing a very high, elaborated version of the melody in the *largo*. As I mentioned earlier, there were serious recording limitations for groups in this period and

the use of a very high register was one way for the piano to be heard, but in this instance it is virtually inaudible.

The piano provides a dramatic introduction to the final song- *Mi Amor* (María Teresa Ovando) - with a two-bar descending arpeggio figure with both hands in octaves. This contrasts with the 'tune and accompaniment' style of the first two songs and provides another example of Ovando making a feature of the piano's unique qualities (Ex 3:12, CD1:11).

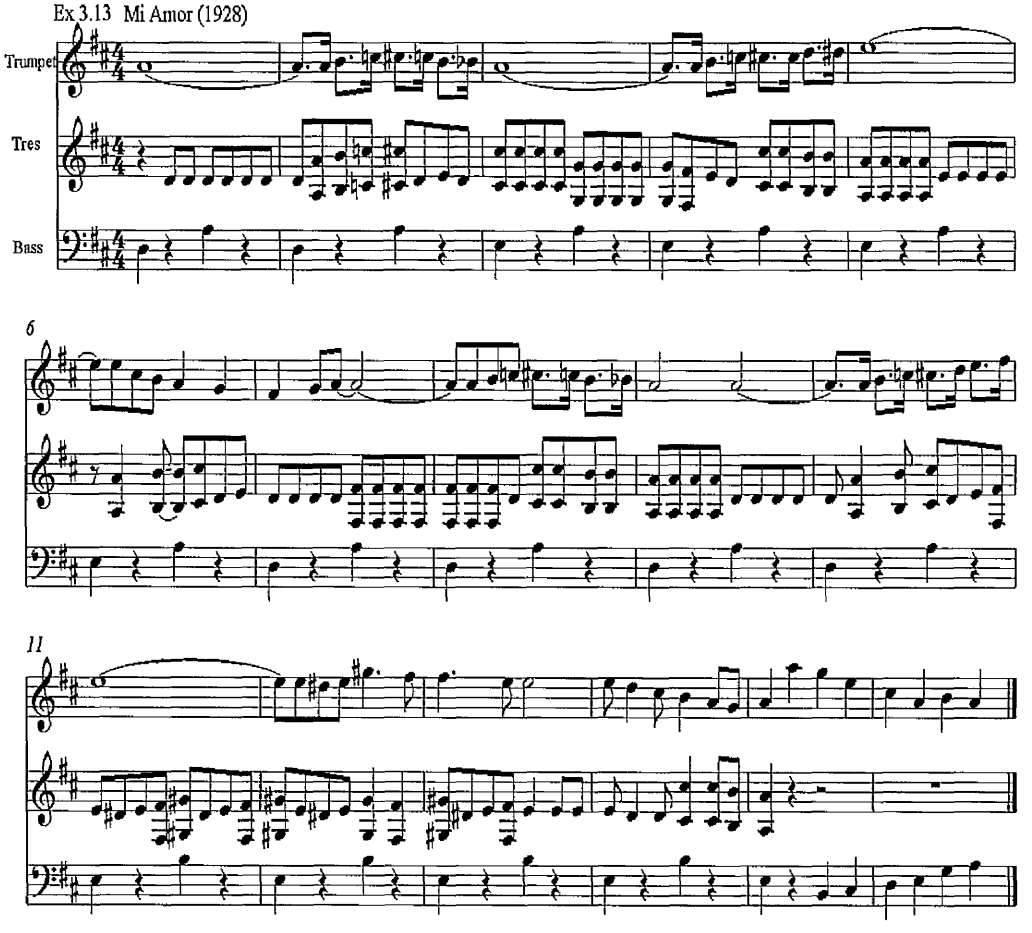
Ex 3.12 Mi Amor (1928) Piano introduction



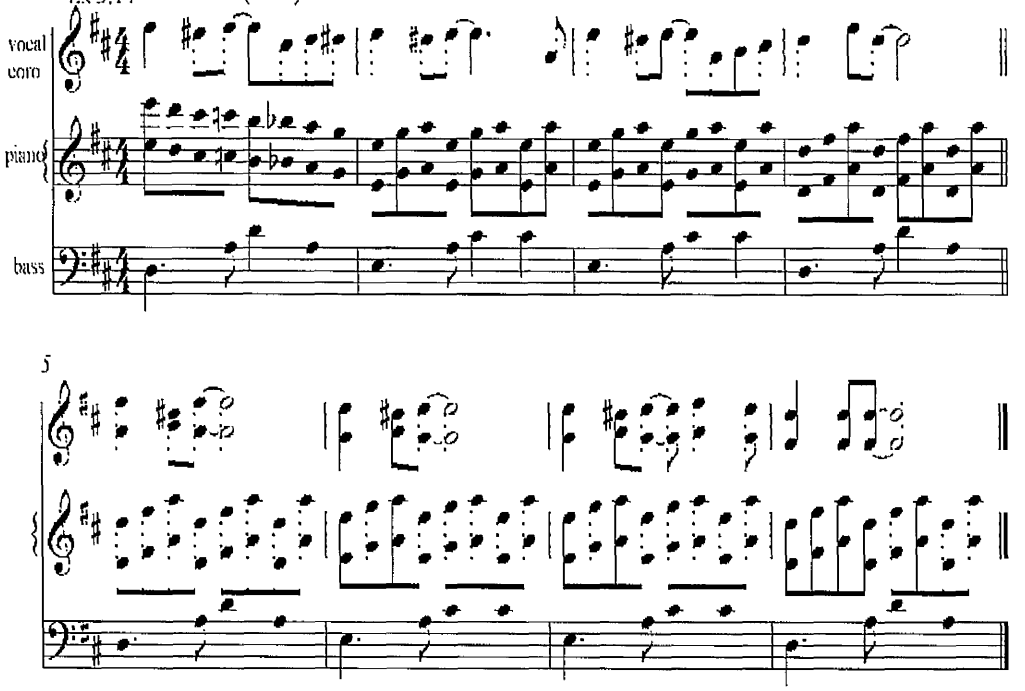
As with *El Pelotero*, the plucked *tres* is featured strongly in the instrumental *largo* section, with a counter-melody to the trumpet's melody (Ex 3.13, CD1:11, 0'03") Like the counter-melody of *Abom Aré* it follows the contours of the main melody while functioning as a counter-melody, but this is in a very *tres*-specific style. A preponderance of repeated notes, more suited to a plucked instrument, contrasts with the elegant chromatic lines of the earlier piano counter-melodies and continues the deliberate showcasing in these songs of the two instrument's distinct strengths. The piano here is virtually inaudible- either due to recording conditions or to the desire of the pianist not to detract from the complex counterpoint of trumpet and *tres*. However Ovando does appear to be doing something different from either *tres* or trumpet in this section. A descending arpeggio is audible in bars seven and eight and the rest appears to be block chords on the third beat of each bar.

The *montuno* section contains a melodic statement from the piano before the start of the main *coro/* vocal call and response but, rather than establishing this melodic statement as a repeated *montuno*, Ovando switches quickly, via a descending chromatic scale, to an arpeggiated, harmonic ostinato under the vocal/*coro* alternation, again using parallel hands in octaves (Ex 3.14, CD1:11, 1'15"). As with Los Marineros, the lyrics are inaudible here.

Ex 3.13 Mi Amor (1928)



Ex 3.14 Mi Amor (1928)



Summary

In spite of the very small sample of songs analysed here, it is still possible to make some general points regarding the development of the piano *montuno*, though with caution. These recordings reveal above all that the piano, from its earliest appearance in *son montuno,* was already being used differently from *danzón* and jazz, and that much of this was due to the influence of the *tres.* As the *tres* is still present in this ensemble, the piano is clearly not replacing it. However, the fact that the *tres* is strummed in the first two songs suggests an acknowledgement that the piano could fulfil some of its more melodic functions, and it provides the main model for the pianist in a number of ways.

As we have seen, the role of the *tres* in the *sexteto*, especially before the arrival of the trumpet, was as much melodic as harmonic. Maria Teresa Ovando amplifies this role in these recordings, giving the piano a much greater melodic prominence than it would have in later ensembles. But, given that the *tres* was still a part of the Gloria Cubana ensemble, the piano has clearly defined differences. This is most notable in the higher range, often in octaves, that could cut through the harmonic fabric of the ensemble, and in the different, more fluid and often chromatic style of melody, which is more suited to the strengths of the instrument.

It is in the call and response of the *montuno* section that this melodic bias is clearest. Although the piano has begun here to develop what would become the 'piano *montuno*', this is not played consistently within the *montuno* section as a repeated ostinato. Rather Ovando moves between piano *montuno*, melodic statement and call and response with the trumpet or *coro*. The piano's role here is closer to that of the trumpet which, as a recent addition to the ensemble, was itself not clearly defined. Both instruments move between melodic statement and semi-improvised counter-melody. In the freer structure of *son montuno* at this point, the melodic role in call and response could come from various sources - even whistles and vocalising by the *coro* in *Mi Amor.*

The influence of contemporary musical styles, such as *danzón* and to a lesser extent jazz, on the piano style in the Gloria Cubana songs is inevitable, given that these were the main two popular musical styles that featured the instrument at this time. The piano role in the introduction and *largo* section shows a debt to traditional *danzón* (to be discussed in chapter 4) and indeed to western classical music. In these sections the piano is more often played in the more 'traditional' style, with the melody played by the right hand while the left provides a bass and either chordal or arpeggiated accompaniment. The influence of jazz on the later *conjunto* becomes clearer because of its comparative absence here. A piano vamp - bass and off-beat chords - is a feature from jazz that became part of many *conjunto* pianists' technique and is notable by its absence in these recordings (though this may be because it was not suited to the slower speeds here). Likewise, the lack of extended solo improvisation by the piano highlights the later effect of exposure to both American and Cuban jazz bands.

What is clear from these recordings is that although the piano part was not solely based on imitation of the *tres,* it was a strong influence. Its melodic bias was extended in the piano part and adapted to its more flowing, chromatic style and, as with the *tres*, there is also a tension between melodic and harmonic functions. This is reflected in the inconsistency of the piano part, particularly in the *montuno* section in which an infant piano *montuno* is beginning to take shape. A consistent, cyclical

montuno, whether melody or harmony orientated, was not yet an automatic feature of the piano style, and this inconsistency would continue in the *conjunto* of the early 1940s.

Conclusion

This chapter has contrasted two different approaches to piano playing. As a part of an attempt to represent, musically, the 'Cuban' in the 19th and the 'Afro-Cuban' in the 20th centuries, classical composers and later 'crossover' writers such as Lecuona attempted to use the instrument in the recreation of popular Afro-Cuban musical forms. Although these composers were often very well versed in Afro-Cuban musical practice, their music remained within European norms and the piano was played in the traditional 'tune and accompaniment' manner. While this can be attributed partly to the fact that they were writing for a solo rather than ensemble instrument, there was no attempt to use repeated cyclical ostinati consistently or to integrate the melody line within them. Even in complex recreations of Afro-Cuban percussive music in twentieth century works such as Lecuona's *Y La Negra Bailaba*, the use of constant movement and repetition with variations is limited, as European classical compositional processes emphasise linear development over cyclical forms and harmonic support remains separate from melodic invention.

The new approach to piano playing that became such as strong feature of the *conjunto* is not immediately in evidence in the Gloria Cubana recordings of 1928, but there are sufficient elements to distinguish it from the piano in both classical and other popular musical forms. Rather than creating a fusion of melodic, counter-melodic and rhythmic elements within a single ostinato, as later *conjunto* pianists would do, Ovando presents a series of linear moves from one element to another. Imitation of the *tres* by use of arpeggiated ostinatos and *pasos de calle* was part of her approach to integrating the piano in the ensemble, but she rarely combines this with vocal duplication, and melodic material is more often found as part of a call and response with the *coro* or in more counter-melodic statement. The influence of the *clave*, likewise, is sporadic, though, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, this was not uncommon during the 1920s. When Ovando is imitating *tres* arpeggiation, there is no attempt to incorporate syncopation or to accent specific beats within the cycle; however, in both melodic and counter-melodic statement, the *clave* is acknowledged.

The difficulty of making judgements based on such an isolated example are obvious, but these recordings reveal Ovando's desire to both imitate the role of *tres* and to highlight the specific strengths of the piano, a tension that remained present in the later *conjunto* piano. While in this instance the informality of the piano role allowed for constant movement between different elements, this tension was resolved in the more formalised arrangements of *conjuntos* by separating the *conjunto* piano role into two parts - that of the piano *montuno* and the virtuoso piano solo.

The shift towards a yet more rhythmic/harmonic and counter-melodic structure in the *conjunto* piano *montuno* can be attributed both to the loss of a melodic role with the expansion of the brass section, and to the need for a stronger rhythmic presence to cut through a fuller sound. It was not a uniform process and *conjunto* pianists varied considerably in how they approached the piano *montuno*, particularly with the emergence of two distinct strands of *son montuno* in the later 1940s. Nevertheless,

the transformation of the *tres montuno* during the 1920s, and parallel attempts to integrate the piano in ensembles such as Gloria Cubana, had a direct bearing on the later development of the *conjunto* piano.

Chapter 4 *Charanga*, Jazz Band and *Conjunto*: Musical Innovation and a new keyboard prominence.

The 1940s saw the emergence of the *conjunto* as one of the most important and popular types of musical ensemble in Cuba. In this chapter I focus on the *conjunto* period for the first time, stressing the importance of this fertile decade in the history of Cuban music, a decade in which in which the piano gained a new-found prominence in all types of ensemble. Having presented the background to the study of the *conjunto* piano in pervious chapters, I now set the scene for the understanding of the interplay between *conjunto* musicians and musicians in other genres, and the mutual influence between different types of ensemble. While this involves some historical background, the main part of this chapter presents original research, including my own transcriptions, on the role of the piano in *danzón* and Cuban jazz during the 1940s.

Three types of musical ensemble dominated Cuban popular music in the 1940s: the *conjunto*, (performing *son montuno*), the *charanga* orchestra (performing *danzón*) and the Cuban jazz band (performing jazz, cabaret and dance music in general). This chapter examines the interplay between these different groups, the genres they performed, and how musical developments in the *charanga* orchestra and jazz band impacted on *conjunto* pianists. The dominance of these three types of ensemble does not mean that other popular styles or ensembles were in decline; choice of listening had increased with the advent of the first commercial radio stations in Cuba in 1922, and this was reinforced from 1943 with the station Mil Diez which championed a broader output, including folkloric styles (Sublette 2004:491-492). Nevertheless, in terms of live playing and recording work for musicians, *conjuntos*, *charanga* orchestras and Cuban jazz bands were where the majority of opportunities were to be found. While these three types of musical ensemble had very different social status and audiences, musicians, and especially pianists, moved freely between genres and bands. With both jazz bands and *charanga* ensembles having incorporated the piano before *conjuntos,* many *conjunto* pianists had a background in one or both of these styles, thus influencing the instrument's role and function in *son montuno.*

Charangas and jazz bands enjoyed a higher social status than *conjuntos* and were seen as 'indoor' ensembles - that is performing in indoor venues such as nightclubs - in contrast to the frequently outdoor, and less established performance opportunities for *son montuno* sextets and septets. Moreover, the contrast between the 'cosmopolitan' piano and the rural *tres* - an essential part of the sextets and septets - cannot be ignored within such a socially divided society. I argue, however, that it was the musical rather than social influence of contemporary musical styles, such as jazz and *danzón* that had a greater impact on the development of the *conjunto.* As I will show, musicians saw the inclusion of the piano in the *conjunto* as a purely musical choice and as part of a wider expansion of the *son montuno* ensemble. It did not have the same social resonance as, for example, the inclusion of the *tumbadora* (conga drum), an instrument associated with Afro-Cuban street *rumba.* Technical issues such as amplification were also present but were not paramount. Interviews with musicians show that competition amongst groups was behind much of the musical experimentation and that the possibilities of the piano were recognised as a strong musical benefit.

As Díaz Ayala notes in his introduction to his discography, it can prove impossible to

categorise performers by genre, due to the frequent movement of musicians between types of musical ensemble: 'Since many performers were conversant with more than one genre, especially after 1925, it was no longer practical to continue separating the music by genre' (Díaz Ayala 2002: Introduction). Beyond genre categorisation, this flexibility makes tracing mutual influence between groups or individual musicians extremely difficult given their regular movement between ensembles, and the resultant musical cross-fertilisation. The pianist Rubén Gonzalez presents one of the best examples of this fluidity. Initially a *charanga* pianist, he then worked with *conjuntos* - Arsenio Rodríguez and Conjunto Kubavana - and jazz bands such as Los Hermanos Palau in the 1940s. He played *chachacha* with Orquesta America in the 1950s, was a part of the more avant-garde Grupo Cubano de Jazz in the 1960s and made a comeback in the 1990s as part of the Buena Vista project.[39]

Establishing a chronology is likewise problematic and while I argue that the influence of *son montuno* was the driving force behind much musical innovation in other types of ensemble, there is no clear sequence of events. Simultaneous innovation in various different types of ensemble, triggered by closer contact in the radio and recording studio, cannot be separated into different eras or periods. As Negus notes: 'while pinpointing historical tendencies and understanding social change is important, we should be wary of attempts to draw neat boundaries around musical eras' and 1940s Havana was a cosmopolitan site of multiple and competing artistic influences (Negus 1996: 136).

The first part of this chapter concentrates on the social context for these three musical styles and the technological changes that affected their development and growth. Social and racial stratification in the 1930s and 40s both controlled and limited opportunities for musicians, particularly Afro-Cuban musicians; musical style was identified with specific social groups and described in racial terms. However, there were opportunities for contact. Radio had been firmly established in Cuba since the late 1920s, when it helped to cement the popularity of *son montuno*, and radio studios were the most important site of contact for musicians (Moore 1997: 103). Negus has described radio as a 'patron' of musical performance, and by the 1940s, Cuban radio was a major source of income for many musicians (Negus 1996: 78). Beyond this, it provided a space where musicians of all genres and backgrounds could mix freely without the social and racial restrictions of live performance.

The second part of the chapter concentrates on the role of the piano in *danzón* and jazz, both before the emergence of the *conjunto* in the late 1930s, when the instrument was gradually integrated into these two genres, and in the continued interplay between all three styles afterwards. Many structural changes in *danzón* and jazz, such as the gradual incorporation of Afro-Cuban rhythmic structures, and the resulting innovations in the role of the piano, were a result of the continued influence of *son montuno* and I examine these piano innovations as originating from, and subsequently returning to, the dominant genre. My aim here is not to present a detailed study of either *danzón* or Cuban jazz but rather to pinpoint features, particularly in the role of the piano, that are relevant to the study of the *conjunto* piano. Given the close working relationships of many of the protagonists of all three genres these features are often difficult to trace, but they provide and important strand in the development of the *conjunto* piano.

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[39] See Sublette 2004: 506, Leymarie 2002:124-125, Evora 2003:231, Durán 1997: 13-20, Orovio 1981:220.

4.1 Social Stratification and Popular Dance Music in Batista's Cuba

Cubans experienced a period of political upheaval from the mid 1930s to 1952. Machado's dictatorship (1925-33) had given way to a period dominated by Fulgenio Batista, either in the role of elected president (1940-1944) or as the force behind a series of puppet presidencies. None of these presidencies (Mendieta 1934-35, Mariano Gomez 1935-36, Bru 1936- 39, Grau San Martín 1944-48 and Prío Socorrás 1948-52) were in place for long, and for ordinary Cubans this period brought political instability and violence. There was little in the way of social change; class and racial divisions, particularly in music and entertainment venues, remained firmly entrenched. For all its instability, however, the period can be seen as a small respite between the harsher reigns of Machado and the post 1952 Batista dictatorship.

Economically, the country performed strongly, particularly after the outbreak of war in 1939, with high wartime sugar prices sustaining growth; per capita income in 1945 was double that of 1939 (Thomas 1971:746). But there was a huge economic and social gulf between Havana, with its sophisticated nightlife, well-established tourist industry and mafia connections, and the poverty-stricken countryside. Racial discrimination was rife. Although the outwardly liberal 1940 constitution, which enjoyed cross party support, outlawed racial segregation and discrimination, it kept in place the restrictions on racially motivated political movements, and political representation of Afro-Cubans remained limited. However, though the constitution was rarely invoked to challenge racism, and discrimination remained a fact of life for Afro-Cubans, it was inadvertently responsible for creating one of the most important black music venues of the period. The Jardines de la Tropical, a beer garden in Marianao, opened its doors to Afro-Cubans from 1940 onwards in order to comply with the new constitution and hired Arsenio Rodríguez and his newly formed *conjunto* (Sublette 2004: 478).

For the musician, this socially and racially stratified society offered many opportunities, and Havana drew talent from all parts of the country. Tourism from the United States grew in importance to the economy as a whole and led to the creation of more musical venues, though this was reversed after the American entry into the war in 1942 and the closure of nightclubs such as the Sans Souci (Sublette 2004:486). Social and racial restrictions affected musicians just as much as they did society in general and had a direct bearing on the career options available. With live performances still the main source of income, music venues and their hiring policies wielded huge power over musicians' careers.

In the 1920s, Cuban jazz bands and *charangas* had occupied a completely different social sphere from the working class sextets and septets that performed *son montuno*. Clubs, hotels and cabarets employed *charanga* groups to play *danzón,* and jazz bands to play a varied repertoire of American jazz and Cuban styles, while *sextetos* and *septetos* played in dance academies, beer gardens and private parties (Moore 1997: 98-100).[40] In the case of jazz there was also a racial distinction; from the time when Jaime Prats founded the first Cuban jazz band in 1922 it was commonplace for these jazz orchestras to be for white musicians only in order to perform in high-class cabarets and hotels (Evora 2003:67-68; Moore 1997:141). This lasted well into the 1940s and 50s, though exceptions were

[40] For more detail see García 2003: 67-82.

made. Rubén González has spoken of his experience of working with Los Hermanos Castro:

> I played a lot with the Hermanos Castro even though they practised a kind of apartheid. They always tried to have all white musicians, but Peruchín and I played with them. They had to accept us because of the way we played (quoted in Durán 1997: 16).

With *danzón*, both the *charanga francesa* ensemble and its precursor, the *orquesta típica*, often employed mixed race players due to their historic links with military and municipal bands (Sublette 2004:247-248). Challenged by the growing popularity of *son montuno* in the 1920s, *charangas* relied on social clubs, which still considered *danzón* to be the national dance, and Acosta notes that orchestras - black, white or mixed race - would play at both black and white social clubs (Acosta 2003:15). With the opening up of Los Jardines de la Tropical to black patrons, both the *conjunto* of Arsenio Rodríguez and the *charanga* of Antonio Arcaño became regular performers, albeit for low wages. Lilí Martínez, pianist with Arsenio Rodríguez, recalled:

> We played in the Tropical Gardens Mondays and Thursdays, together with Arcaño. Often, when they paid us it was seventy-three *centavos* for each player, sometimes less. I don't even want to remember the times that the party giver left without paying (quoted in M.A Martínez 1993: 219).[41]

Thus by the 1940s, while *charangas* enjoyed a higher social standing than *conjuntos* and shared much of the same audience as jazz bands, they increasingly shared the bill with *conjuntos* at more modest clubs, and Arcaño himself worked as a booking agent for Arsenio Rodríguez (Salazar 2001:3). However, their continuing custom of incorporating classical melodies into their pieces reflected their slightly higher social status; as late as 1948 Arcaño y sus Maravillas quoted from Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty in *Llegaron los Millionarios* (Tumbao CD029).

Although a colour bar existed in some hotels and cabarets, there were middle class venues that would accept black players, but *conjuntos* were the least likely to be hired. Even black social clubs, (such as Club Atenas and Unión Fraternal) while a major employer of black musical talent, refused to use black *son montuno* groups throughout the 1930s and 40s until *son's* national acceptance was established. This was for fear of being linked with black *rumberos,* performers of Afro-Cuban street *rumba* (Sublette 2004:366).[42]

Although it was audiences and venues that helped to define the social standing of an ensemble, its musical categorisation was defined by instrumental line-up and playing style rather then repertoire. A typical *charanga* orchestra consisted of piano, violins, bass, sometimes a cello, one or two flutes and percussion - usually *timbales* (a pair of snare-type drums on a stand) and *guiro* (a scraped serrated gourd. The *conjunto* comprised piano, sometimes *tres* and/or guitar, three trumpets, bass and percussion - *bongó*, conga, *claves* and maracas. Jazz bands were the largest type of ensemble and differed from *conjuntos* in that they had saxophones, and sometimes a trombone, as well as trumpets in the brass section, and initially just a drum kit, though Cuban percussion gradually became an

[41] En los Jardines de la Tropical tocábamos los lunes y los jueves, simultaneando con Arcaño. Muchas veces, cuando pagaban, eran setenta y tres centavos para cada músico; y otras menos. Cuando se iba sin pagar el individuo que daba la fiesta, no quiero ni acordarme.
[42] See also García 2003:67-75, 86.

established feature (Sublette 2004:308, 351-352).

The basic repertoire of all these ensembles was the Cuban popular song, which could be arranged and played in different styles depending on the musical approach of the group. *Charangas* performed mainly *danzónes* but also *bolero, bolero-son* and later mambo and *chachacha. Conjuntos* performed *boleros, afros* and *son montuno* (which included the similarly structured theatrical *guaracha* and *rumba*-themed *guaguancó*). Jazz bands had the broadest repertoire as they were expected to play Cuban styles, such as *bolero, afro*, salon congas and cabaret *rumba* (cleaned-up versions of street *conga* and *son montuno*), more classical works such as *zarzuela*, and European dances such as the waltz, polka and foxtrot (Moore 1997:142).

Many musicians worked in different genres and for different types of ensemble simultaneously, and not just as players. Arsenio Rodríguez wrote arrangements for the jazz band Orquesta Casino de la Playa in the late 1930s before becoming successful with his own band. Niño Rivera, who had success as a *tres* player with a number of *conjuntos* in the 1940s, became in the 1950s an arranger in all three styles - for Conjunto Casino, Antonio Arcaño and the Riverside Orchestra (Leymarie 2002:126).

The social situation was more relaxed outside of live performance. Radio had democratised listening and by the late 1920s was the most important cultural medium on the island (Moore 1997:103). In this context, rigid definitions of genre or social standing did not apply. By the 1940s the radio station Mil Diez had its two biggest draws - Arsenio Rodríguez and Antonio Arcaño playing in succession at 5pm and 7pm respectively and although they were often presented as bitter rivals, the close proximity of the musicians can only have accelerated musical cross fertilisation (Sublette 2004:492). The recording studio also offered opportunities for musical collaboration and socialising. As early as 1929 Trio Matamoros (*soneros* from the Oriente) recorded some numbers with one of the biggest names in *danzón*, the pianist Antiono María Romeu (Leymarie 2002:66; Díaz Ayala 1981: 144). However, these opportunities were for recording only - Arsenio Rodríguez recorded with Casino de la Playa as a *tresero*, as did Ramón Castro, a *bongosero,* but neither was featured in live performance (Moore 1997:143)

The recording industry remained in American hands in the form of RCA. The 1920s had seen a boom with travelling field recording or musicians travelling to New York to record, but political instability in Cuba, combined with the American Depression, meant that very few recordings were made in the early part of the 1930s. The final suppression of political opposition in 1937 kick-started the industry and the relative stability of the early 40s created an opportunity for musicians. Panart, the first home grown Cuban studio, opened in 1943, breaking RCA's monopoly, and the Seeco label was founded the same year, further stimulating the industry (Sublette 2004:497; Delannoy 2001: 88).

For all three types of ensemble - jazz band, *charanga* and *conjunto* - this recording gap poses a problem for the study of the role of the piano during the 1930s, but above all the *conjunto,* as there are no recorded examples of the first few years of its inclusion. Arsenio Rodríguez made his first recordings in 1940, immediately after forming his own *conjunto* but both Conjunto Casino and Sonora Matancera, who had included the piano from at the latest, 1937, were not able to record until 1942 and 1944 respectively (Interview René Espí 27.4.04; Diaz Ayala 2002: Sección01C436, Sección04M1721;

Sublette 2004:484). Thus analysis of initial experimentation by pianists, and the very early development of the piano in the *conjunto,* is impossible. Any conjecture has to be based on comparison of earlier recordings of the piano in the sextet (such as those of Sexteto Gloria Cubana, examined in chapter 3) with post-1940 recordings, and examination of other genres such as *danzón* and jazz.

Cuban jazz bands and *charangas* were quicker to record after the gap. In 1937, RCA made a series of recordings with a large number of groups, among them jazz bands such as the newly formed Casino de la Playa and Los Hermanos Castro, Antonio Maria Romeu's *charanga* orchestra and established *son montuno* groups such as Septeto Nacional (Sublette 2004:444). The newer *conjuntos*, with their more experimental use of the piano were not included in these sessions. Given the willingness of record companies to record *son montuno* (at the expense of jazz) in the 1920s and the fact that *septetos* were included in these recordings, this would not be necessarily musical snobbery, but perhaps a reflection of the commercial risk in recording a newer, less established sound.

The piano in Cuban popular genres

Musicians of all popular genres were inevitably attracted to, and influenced by other musical styles and types of ensemble, which were encountered in recordings sessions, on the radio or when playing live. The piano had been present in *charanga* orchestras since the late 19th century, and since the 1920s in Cuban jazz bands (Leymarie 2002:79; Sublette 2004:307). As an indoor instrument, it was associated with the type of high-class venues that were frequently off-limits to the black and working class musicians who played *son montuno.* The example of *charangas* and jazz bands might have suggested to *soneros* in the 1920s and early thirties that the piano could represent a bid for social respectability as well as a musical asset. Its inclusion appears to have been chronologically earlier in *conjuntos* that catered for a whiter audience in live performance. Both Sonora Matancera and Conjunto Casino for example were using the piano by 1937, while Arsenio Rodríguez, who had a lower social standing and blacker audience, did not include the instrument until 1940.

However, the influence of *danzón* and jazz on *soneros* was much greater than social cachet. While social and racial divisions were reflected in musical style and repertoire, the increasing importance of radio and recording diminished their influence and they were never the only factors in dictating specific instrumental innovations or alterations. The piano was an important element of both the *charanga* and the jazz band, and the inevitable cross fertilisation between musical genres had a direct bearing on the development of the *conjunto*. As with an earlier change to the *son* ensemble - the replacement of the *marimbula* and *botija* by string bass - musical judgements were at least as important as the desire for a more sophisticated image.

The next part of this chapter examines *danzón* and jazz, in order to establish how the piano functions within these musical styles. The influence of *son montuno* on the musical structure of these two genres was strong. Both had by the 1930s adopted an open-ended *montuno* section to close many pieces, and instrumental roles were adjusted accordingly. The role of the piano within this rhythmic ostinato developed differently in each genre, with the *charanga* ensemble making more drastic changes with the *'nuevo ritmo'* (see below) but in both cases it was the structural change that prompted a revision of instrumental roles. For jazz bands, overseas influence and the increasing importance of the

piano solo gave a new dimension to the piano part. While *conjunto* pianists developed a style that remained distinct from both *danzón* and jazz, elements of both were incorporated into *son montuno* piano style and had a strong impact on its development.

4.2. Danzón

Danzón is a slow instrumental dance genre, which evolved in the 19th century from the French/Haitian *contradanse* into the *contradanza* and, by 1879, the *danzón* (Alén 1998: 121-127). Rebeca Mauleón has described it as the 'Africanisation of the European' in contrast to son *montuno*'s more equal blend of elements and influences (Mauleón interview 18.4.03). Like *son montuno* decades later, the original format for playing it was an outdoor ensemble - the *orquesta típica.* This was followed in the early part of the twentieth century by a new line-up, the *charanga francesa* (Sublette 2004:308). By the 1930s it was in decline, due to the growing popularity of jazz and *son montuno,* and the *charanga* orchestras would not fully regain their popularity until the impact of *chachacha* and mambo in the 1950s. However, groups such as Arcaño y Sus Maravillas had a huge following in the 1940s and experimented with instrumental changes and innovations, alongside and often inspired by their *sonero* colleagues. Moreover the status of *danzón,* as Cuba's 'national' dance and as a representation of *cubanidad* during the Wars of Independence and the early Republic, gave it a continuing respectability (Torres 1995:173).

Danzón orchestras thus went through various stages of development and growth. Of interest here are the *orquesta típica,* the original instrumental line-up in which were established instrumental roles before the entry of the piano into the ensemble (from about 1870 to 1899); the *charanga francesa* and early use of the piano (from 1899 to the late thirties); and the subsequent musical innovations of groups such as Arcaño y sus Maravillas in the 1940s which had a strong influence on piano style. As regards the role of the piano in the ensemble, there are two overlapping phases: the more melodic *charanga francesa* style of the 1910s-1930s and the *son*-influenced harmonic/rhythmic ostinato which succeeded it in the late 1930s.

The first *danzón* is traditionally attributed to Miguel Faílde with *Las Alturas de Simpson,* composed in 1877 (Evora 2003:155). Faílde expanded the two-part *contradanza* into a rondo form, which included a repeated introductory section, played in between each new section, to allow dancers to rest. Unlike the formal group choreography of the *contradanza,* the *danzón* was danced by couples and this, combined with the use in the orchestra of hand-held percussion (the *guiro*) led initially to a moral panic over its perceived 'Africanisms' (Leymarie 2002:22; Moore 1997:24).

The most common line-up of an *orquesta típica* would be cornet, trombone, *figle* (a low register keyed brass instrument, superseded in the European orchestra by the tuba) two clarinets, two violins, bass and percussion - *guiro* and timpani, later replaced by *timbales* (Sublette; 2004:247). With no harmonic instruments in the ensemble, the arrangements relied on a mixture of counterpoint between band members and shared accompanying chords (often following the rhythmic pattern of the *timbales*) supporting a solo melodic line. Given the contrapuntal nature of the arrangements, improvisation was confined to variation or ornamentation of melodic lines, which were played in turn by different instruments in specific sections.

The *orquesta típicas* were first African American ensembles (in the widest sense) to be recorded, well before New Orleans jazz in 1923 (Díaz Ayala/Spottswood 1999:1). The North American recording companies Victor, Edison and Columbia recorded in Havana between 1905 and 1909 with three ensembles providing the majority of recordings: Orquesta Pablo Valenzuela, Orquesta de Enrique Peña and Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. In 1999 the Arhoolie label released *The Cuban Danzón - Before There Was Jazz* (Arhoolie 7032) a compilation of these early recordings and this provides a valuable insight into the structural format of early *danzones* and how this affected the orchestration.

Within this compilation, the work of Felipe Valdés provides the most complete picture of orchestral development during this period, with recordings from 1907, 1911, 1916 and one (including a piano) from 1923. The 1907 recordings feature a line-up of two clarinets, two trumpets, violin (played pizzicato) trombone, timpani, *claves* and *guiro*, and the rondo structure of the pieces is reinforced by instrumental alternation, with the pieces following a similar pattern. The introduction is stated first and is repeated between the contrasting interludes; this section is more contrapuntal with trumpet and clarinet often doubling the melody or playing in thirds or sixths and makes a great use of countermelody. The more tranquil interludes, where the actual dancing would take place, made use of a solo instrument to play the melody (with different instruments including trombone, alternating for each section). Mid-range harmony was provided by the other melodic instruments, often using the *banqueato* rhythm.

The final Valdés track, *El Capitolio*, recorded in 1929 by the then re-named Orquesta Francesa de Felipe B. Valdés, exemplifies the multiple ways in which the piano was already being used in the newer *charangas*. The pianist (uncredited) combines melodic and counter-melodic responsibility with rhythmic chordal accompaniment and reinforcement of the bass, in a way that either supports or replaces existing instrumental parts. In a new function, the piano is used in this track to keep the momentum between phrases, with added flourishes and the use of melodic anacrusis.

The *Charanga* Piano

The first use of the piano in a *danzón* ensemble had taken place in 1898. Sublette cites Antonio Torroella's group, and Orovio the ensemble of Leopoldo Cervantes, but both agree on the pianist - Antonio María Romeu, who was to become the musical giant of *danzón* (Sublette 2004:307; Orovio 2004: 186). Regular use of the piano was a gradual process with a long overlap between *típicas* and *charangas* with some *típicas* (such as that of Felipe Valdés) adding a piano to their existing ensemble. Sublette maintains that the word *francesa* denoted the presence of the piano in an ensemble and this is reinforced by the Valdés example. The eventual line-up of the *charanga francesa* was piano, bass, percussion, violin(s), and flute(s), and the popularity of this format was assured after 1922 by its superior radio reproduction in comparison with *típicas* (Acosta 2003:15).

Pianists in the new *charangas* were relatively free to create their own role within the ensemble as the piano was not replacing a specific instrument. Part of the attraction of the piano was its versatility, as it could provide solo melody, counter-melodic lines, chordal accompaniment and reinforce the bass (Linares 1979:113). Its wide range meant that high melodic or counter-melodic lines would cut through the orchestral fabric and could be reinforced in octaves.

With the loss of the brass, which had provided most of the harmonic support in the *orquesta típica*, it seems odd that the harmonic function of the piano was not more pronounced from the start and that it remained a strongly melodic instrument. I suggest that this may have been due to the nature of written arrangements. Although *danzón* pianists played from sheet music, it would probably have been from a piano reduction rather than a specific ensemble part (Acosta Interview 16.8.02). Piano reductions of popular *danzónes*, of the type reproduced in León (1974) were published in sheet music form and pianists could use these as a basis for their part. The initial role of the piano, then, would have been the reinforcement of all parts, and the skill of the pianist lay in the relative weight given to a particular element at any one time and to the ability to improvise a counter-melody, or to ornament an existing one. A track from the Arhoolie compilation - *Huyendole a un Ratón* recorded by the Orquesta Francesa de Antonio Romeu in 1924 - illustrates the constantly changing function of the piano. Within the introduction, Romeu alternates a chordal vamp with a counter-melody in a high register, while in the interludes he further reinforces the bass, provides chordal accompaniment under solo melodic lines and at one point shares the melodic line with pizzicato strings.

Antonio María Romeu was one of the most important figures in twentieth century *danzón*. As well as being one of the first pianists to play in a *charanga,* he was the director of his own orchestra for over fifty years and wrote over five hundred *danzones* (Orovio 2004:186). He was featured on the first ever *danzón* recording in 1904 and in the earliest radio broadcasts of dance music (Evora 2003: 47; Sublette 2004: 350). He formed his own group around 1911 but was also well known as a solo pianist with a regular spot at the Café Diana where he played solo piano versions of *danzones* (Sublette 2004:308-309).

From 1910 onwards, when the first open-ended *montuno* section appeared in *danzón* (in *El Bombín de Baretto* by José Urfé) *son montuno* heavily influenced *danzón* musicians. Structurally, the inclusion of a *montuno* section helped *charangas* to play for longer, though Acosta maintains that a greater level of improvisation was already in place from the beginning of the century for this reason (Acosta Interview 16.8.02). In terms of repertoire, Romeu was one of the first to take advantage of *son's* popularity, creating a *danzón* in 1923 from the *son montuno Tres Lindas Cubanas* (written by Guillermo Castillo and recorded by Sexteto Habanero) (Sublette 2004:344). As well as being a continuation of the tradition of taking tunes from elsewhere and '*danzónising*' them, this represented recognition of *son montuno*'s growing importance from one of the leading figures in *danzón.*

Romeu's reworking of *Tres Lindas Cubanas* also illustrates how the idea of a solo section for piano was developing. As a solo pianist he would have been accustomed to provide variations within his performance of *danzones,* and both as a soloist and within the *charanga,* he created his own unique style if improvisation and variation (León 1974: 225). Acosta describes him thus:

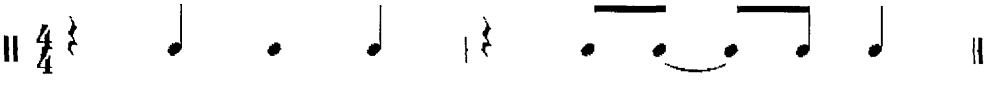
> He was one of the first well-known for improvising in the *danzón* and he had a very definite style; there are different styles with the piano playing in *danzón* and he had a very definite style (Acosta interview: 16.8.02).

According to Anselmo Sacasas, pianist with Orquesta Casino de la Playa, he had a lighter style than contemporaries and 'was a pianist who played in thirds, never chords' (Mamesy Interview 1988).[43]

Romeu's recording of *Tres Lindas Cubanas* in 1926 included a solo improvisation, which was subsequently used in other musicians' versions of the song (Leymarie 2002:69). Although the idea of an extended solo piano section thus became established, the fact that his improvisation could become a 'set piece' within the song illustrates its formally structured and conservative quality. It was a long way from the harmonically and rhythmically free solos of later *conjunto* and jazz band pianists.

The recordings that Romeu made in the late 1930s, some as part of the marathon RCA Victor recording session following the 'recording gap', further illustrate the persistence of the flexible and multi-function piano style. Sung *danzones* had become very popular in the 1930s and Romeu recorded between 1937 and 1940 with the singer Barbarito Díez, though he rarely used a vocalist in live performance (Leymarie 2002:71, Tumbao CD067). These songs were entitled either *danzonetes* or *bolero sones* and show a greater influence of *son montuno* in the faster *montuno* section and the use of anticipated bass, but there is still little real instrumental improvisation in the call and response sections. Romeu's piano style is more chordal and harmonic, perhaps due to his surrender of the melody line to Díez. In both sung pieces and the instrumental *danzones*, he makes use of both the now old-fashioned *banqueato (*for example in *Jibacoa),* and a type of vamp more common to jazz, using a rhythm reminiscent of *El Manisero* and showing more clearly the influence of *clave* (*Dale como Es, Volví a Querer, Agua*).

Ex 4.1 'Manisero' Rhythm



Nevertheless, in spite of the growing influence of these other styles, the basic function of the piano remained: to provide reinforcement of all elements - harmonic, melodic and rhythmic - where necessary and to move fluidly between them. The importance of Antonio María Romeu lies in his perfecting of this fluid piano style. Although *conjunto* pianists were well aware of later innovations in the *charanga francesa* in the 1940s, it would be this earlier style that they had grown up with and, in many cases, played professionally. As we shall see in the next chapter, this type of fluid movement between melodic and harmonic support was a feature of early piano experiments in *son montuno*.

[43] Era un pianista del tercerita... nunca con los acordes.

The *nuevo ritmo* and *charanga* innovation

The 1940s represented a change of direction in *danzón,* with the innovations of musicians such as Antonio Arcaño and the Lopez brothers, Israel and Orestes, who worked as his writing and arranging team, responsible for the majority of his *danzones*. Arcaño, a flautist who had previously worked with Antonio María Romeu, founded his own ensemble in 1937, returning to the instrumental format which had been briefly overshadowed by the sung *danzonete*. His was the first *charanga* to include a *tumbadora* (from 1939) taking the idea from Arsenio Rodríguez but saving it for the *montuno* section only, and by 1944 he had further expanded the string section (Leymarie 2002:111-112; Evora 2003: 157; Salazar 1991: 20). According to Arcaño:

> When I founded my orchestra in 1937, the *danzón* was at a low point and competition was very, very strong; musicians had to really excel and include other styles in their *danzones*, to change instrumentation and innovate (quoted in Torres 1995: 178).[44]

One of the Lopez brothers' innovations was a structural change. According to Israel 'Cachao' Lopez;

> When I began to play in 1926, *danzón* was still a formal, ballroom dance, very traditional, with very rigid steps, in spite of the fact that it had a final coda that allowed a more lively improvisation. But in 1937, when Arcaño y sus Maravillas was founded, we carried out a complete renovation of *danzón*, although without harming it (quoted in Padura Fuentes 2003: 94).

It was these structural changes - the expansion of the *montuno* section into subsections, including a solo piano improvisation, and the simplification of its harmonic structure - that enabled a new piano style to emerge. Although *danzón* had never been complex harmonically, composers had made greater use of chromatic progressions and regular modulation, and this was stripped down to the more static tonic/dominant repetition of *son montuno*. Moreover, the piano solos created by Jesús Lopez, Arcaño's pianist, although by necessity compressed for recordings, represented a new, jazz influenced style of soloing and the harmonically static progressions provided a neutral platform over which to improvise more freely.

[44] Al fundarse la orquestra que yo dirijo, en 1937,el danzón estaba en baja, la competencia era muy dura, ¡durísima! Y los músicos tenían que superarse mucho e incluir otros repertorios en sus danzones; cambiar los instrumentos y innovar.

Antonio Arcaño

Recordings of this new style of *danzón* were not made until well after Arcaño's restructuring of the *charanga*, making it more difficult to establish how early these changes took place. As with the early *conjuntos*, we have to rely on recordings made later in the 1940s and even 1950s to comment on how this restructuring changed the role of the piano within the *charanga* orchestra and to what extent this influenced, or was influenced by, *conjunto* pianists. Nevertheless, a clear division emerges between the more traditional *largo* section (still the larger part of the piece) and *son*-influenced *montuno*, and although much of the new piano style did represent a break from the past, many established *danzón* piano techniques remained.

Recordings from the 1940s and early 1950s, reissued by Tumbao (CD029) reveal that within the introduction and subsequent interludes, the pianist Jesús Lopez was continuing with traditional role of the piano - the fluid movement between harmonic and melodic or counter-melodic support. In the introductions, Lopez combines counter-melody with virtuoso linking phrases (for example in *El Sargento Monar,* recorded in 1951) while in the more tranquil interludes often plays the melody in octaves (*Arcaño y su Nuevo Ritmo, Doña Olga,* both from 1944). The harmonic vamp in the first interlude of *Caballeros Coman Vianda*, (1945) is in the *banqueato* rhythm, used by brass sections in the *orquesta típica*, and supports a lush string version of a melody from Dvorak's New World symphony.

The *nuevo ritmo* was not one specific rhythm, though a few predominated, but the use of a repeated and consistent rhythmic ostinato during the *montuno* section. Mauleón maintains that the *montuno* section as a whole was given this name by the López brothers, and later renamed the *mambo* (Mauleón 1999: 25).[45] Arcaño himself described the way that this section evolved:

[45] For more on the debate over the roots of the mambo genre, see Acosta 1983: 43-50.

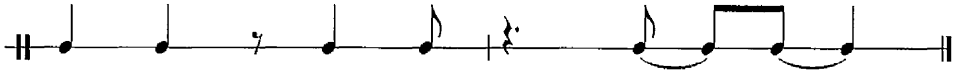
> Orestes López would play his syncopated style in the piano part and I would follow, improvising figures on the flute. Soon the improvisation became the basis of this style and spread to all of the orchestra, so without creating a specific number, we started to play the *nuevo ritmo* (quoted in Torres 1995: 178).[46]

The most frequent rhythm used by Arcaño for this section was based on a syncopated *tres* rhythm, found in *son montuno* and subsequently used as the basis for many piano *montunos* (Mauleón 1999:34; Garcia 2003:166). It had also been used as the rhythmic basis for a saxophone ostinato in jazz bands from the late 1930s and thus was not strictly 'new' (Ex 4.2). Cachao himself stated 'You could say that the way of playing the *montuno* section took much more from Cuban *son* in terms of syncopation' (Mauleón 1998:22).[47]

Ex 4.2 Nuevo Ritmo

Another common rhythm was that used by Abelardito Valdés for his classic *danzón, Alemendra,* quoted by Mauleón (1999: 26) though not present in the 1955 recording (Ex 4.3).

Ex 4.3 Almendra Piano Vamp



These rhythms, or variations on them, were given to the string section, either bowed or pizzicato and to the piano. It became the basis of the new piano style in the *montuno* section, which consisted of a syncopated chordal vamp, either synchronised completely with the rhythm of the string section or interlocking slightly with it. The flautist (Arcaño himself or his deputy José Antonio Cruz) would improvise over this. The fact that the string parts were written meant that pianists had to play their ostinato consistently and the freedom to vary and ornament, though retained in the *largo*, was lost in this section.

This was a new way of organising music for the *charanga* and reveals the extent to which the influence of *son montuno* was still behind much musical change. Rather than the *montuno* section being a short coda to an extended series of (written) interludes, it became the main focus of a piece, even to

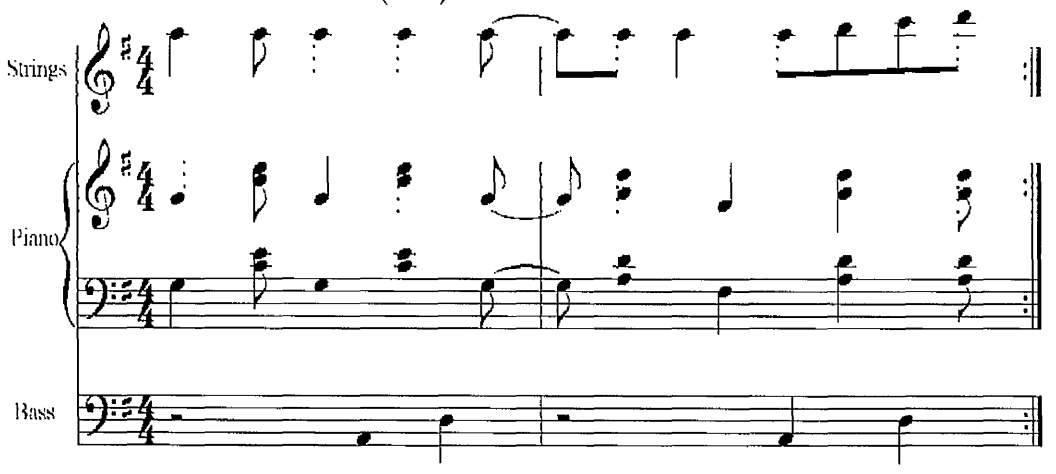
[46] Orestes López incluia en la parte de piano su estilo sincopado y yo seguía esas improvisaciones haciendo filigranas con la flauta. Muy pronto la improvisación sobre la base de este estilo se generalizó en toda la orquesta y así, sin haber creado un número específico, se comienza a tocar el ritmo nuevo.
[47] Se puede decir que la manera de tocar la parte del *montuno* tomó mucho más del *son* cubano en terminos de la síncopa.

the extent of losing the other sections. Indeed Arcaño's *Mambo*, written in 1938 by Orestes Lopez but not recorded until 1951, was built around a single *montuno* section with no *largo* (Sublette 2004: 451). The restrictions of recording meant that Arcaño felt it could not be fully realised on a recording:

> 'My orchestra sounded better live than on the recordings... my live *danzones* at dances were of eight or eleven minutes duration... the 78s could not be more than 2 mins 45 secs. This is why I didn't record Orestes' *mambo* until 1951' (quoted in Salazar 2001: 21).

This change gave a greater prominence to the rhythm section, of which the piano was a part, and resulted in a more consistent ostinato style. *Charanga* pianists had to lock in, both rhythmically and harmonically, with written string parts, and this meant no longer simply moving between melodic or harmonic material already covered by other instruments but providing a consistent harmonic and rhythmic basis for extended improvisation. Moreover, in an echo of *conjunto* piano style, left and right hands played the same rhythm rather than executing different roles. I have transcribed in example 4.4 the strings, piano and bass from the *montuno* section of *Jovenes de la Defensa*, recorded in 1946 (Ex 4.4, CD1:12,2'01"). This piano *montuno* is identical rhythmically to many *conjunto montunos*, but it is un-arpeggiated and without the characteristic octave doubling in the right hand.

Ex 4.4 Jovenes de la Defensa (1946)

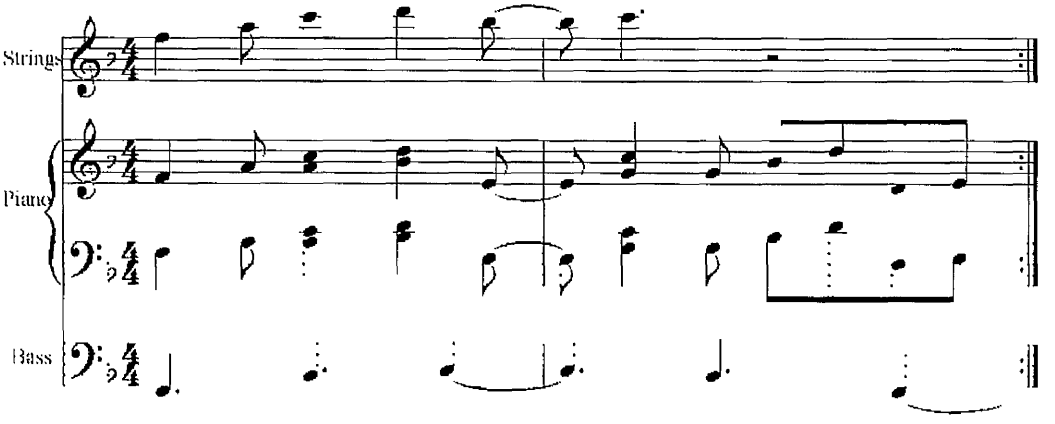


The idea of simplifying the underlying harmonic structure to hover around one tonal centre was not unique to the work of the Lopez brothers and Arcaño. Both Sublette and Mauleón cite the harmonically modern *Almendra,* written in 1938 by Abelardito Valdés (and recorded by, among others, Paulina Alvarez in 1939, Casino de la Playa in 1940 and not by Valdés himself until 1955) as another example of this new style; its entire *montuno* section is constructed over an unresolved dominant seventh (Sublette 2004:451).

As late as 1951 when *Corta la Caña* was recorded by Arcaño, the influence of *son montuno* remained strong. The song even includes a sung section within the *montuno* in which the strings are absent and the flute alternates with the *coro* in the style of a *septeto* trumpet. The piano *montuno* is slightly more arpeggiated than in earlier pieces, with the *tres*-style arpeggiation appearing at the end of

the ostinato; the bass executes the (crotchet) anticipated bass with strings and piano providing the (quaver) staggered anticipation. Again I have transcribed strings, piano and bass (Ex 4.5, CD1:13, 2'01'').

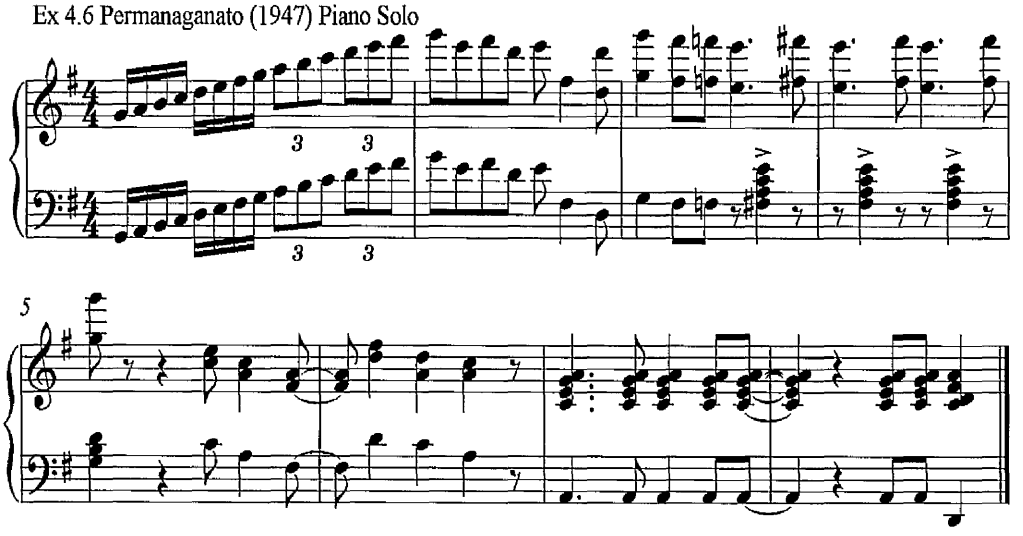
Ex 4.5 Corta la Cana (1951)



The *Charanga* Piano Solo

As I mentioned in the previous section, Antonio María Romeu had included piano solos in *danzones*. However, as he was also a solo pianist, these solos differed little from his solo performances. His famous solo in *Tres Lindas Cubanas*, for example, was performed with just a *guiro* for accompaniment (as he would do in his solo work) rather than over an orchestral ostinato (Leymarie 2002:69) A new type of jazz-influenced extended piano solo was already present in the late 1930s (when Romeu was recording *Tres Lindas Cubanas)* in the work of Cuban jazz bands, notably Casino de la Playa. This jazz influenced type of solo was clearly an influence on Jesús López in Arcaño's group, though his solos had a far more structured pattern and rarely lasted longer than eight bars of 4/4 in recordings (though of course they would be longer in live performance). Many followed a two-part structure with a harmonically and rhythmically free opening four bars, followed by a statement of the *montuno* for two bars and then a rhythmically unsettling bridge. I have transcribed here the piano solo from *Permanganato*, recorded in 1947 by Arcaño y sus Maravillas and performed by Jesús López which provides a good example of this eight bar structure (Ex 4.6, CD1;14, 2'10'').

Ex 4.6 Permanaganato (1947) Piano Solo



Harmonic innovation in the work of Arcaño was not confined to solos; many pieces with a North American theme such as *Broadway* and *Rapsodia en Azul* have correspondingly lush, jazzy and chromatic harmony but this was in the *largo* sections of the piece (Tumbao CD029). Within the *montuno*, the stripped down harmonic feel provided the conditions for López to be able to create and resolve discord within a very short space of time.

Summary

The innovations of musicians in groups like Arcaño's, while radical, did not change the essential structure of *danzón*. The alternation of flute and string interludes remained in the opening sections, as did the practice of using well known existing melodies and these sections still comprised the larger part of the piece. However the extension of the *montuno* section and the move towards a more harmonically static vamp changed the piano part in this section beyond recognition. Its role became an essential part of an interlocking ostinato, distinct from both bass and strings and with an increasingly important rhythmic element, but still essentially chordal. *Son montuno* was clearly a strong influence on these musicians, from the *nuevo ritmo* itself to the alternation of instrumental improvisations, but they could not take that freedom too far:

> That final part was what we worked on the most making it more lively, introducing what's known as the *tumbao*, the *mambeo*, but without changing the structure of the rhythm too much, because *danzón* is already hard to dance to, in and of itself. *Son* on the other hand is freer, less schematic than *danzón*, and more open to any type of innovation. (Israel 'Cachao' López, quoted in Padura Fuentes 2003: 95)

To what extent these innovations in *danzón* influenced *soneros* is more difficult to pinpoint. The innovations of Arcaño and the López brothers in the *montuno* section were contemporaneous with the early development of the *conjunto* and it is therefore difficult to ascertain to what extent the two types of ensemble took from each other. As I mentioned earlier, many *conjunto* pianists had grown up

with or played *danzón,* and *conjunto* pianists replicated some stylistic features of earlier styles of *danzón*. The piano's role was less clearly defined during the *largo* section of *son montuno,* and improvisation around the melodic material, counter-melody or arpeggiated accompaniment were all techniques that both genres shared.

The *danzón* piano solo seems initially less influential. Cuban jazz bands such as Casino De La Playa had developed the idea of a piano solo in the late 1930s and their flamboyant and extended solos provided a bigger impetus to *conjunto* pianists than the short and more overtly structured *charanga* piano solos. As we shall see in the following chapter however, there are many examples of the latter style by *conjunto* pianists and within the time restrictions of a recording session, such a structured approach could be an advantage. Moreover, Lilí Martínez has described Jesús López as 'tremendo!' and there was daily contact between the two pianists at the studios of Mil Diez (M.A Martínez 1993: 221).

With the repeated piano ostinato in the *montuno* section there are further parallels. The function of the piano as a rhythmic instrument had been considerably expanded in the *charanga,* and the *nuevo ritmo* strongly influenced the placing of accents and sporadic chords in the more fluid *conjunto montuno*. Moreover, as I will show in Chapter 6, a more chordal piano style, reminiscent of these *charanga montunos,* did become a feature of the *conjunto* of Arsenio Rodríguez. Because of the retention of the *tres* in his ensemble, Arsenio and Lilí Martínez used this type of *montuno* as the basis for a complex rhythmic interlocking between piano and *tres*, taking fusion between the genres a step further. Mauleón has also made the comparison between the tres/piano interlocking of Arsenio's *conjunto* and the relationship between the strings and piano in the *charanga* in the way that the two lines overlap and separate (Mauleón interview 18.4.03).

Without recordings of either Arcaño's *danzón* or the new *conjuntos* before 1940 it is impossible to trace a clear line of influence from one style to another, as many of Arcaño's innovations were contemporaneous with *conjunto* developments. Mutual influence is clear in both the rhythmically interlocking structure of the *montuno* section and in the role of specific instruments, particularly the piano. While the *montuno* section originated in *son montuno*, it had become a regular feature in other types of ensemble well before the innovations of Arcaño; what he did was formalise the structures and use written orchestrations for repeated ostinatos that were still largely improvised in other genres. In this, his influence on the *conjunto* is clear.

4.3 Cuban Jazz Bands

Cuban jazz groups had been in existence since the 1910s in Havana. Evora suggests that the first American jazz band visited Cuba in 1916, though he does not specify a name for this ensemble, and by the 1920s there were regular American tours of the island, leading to a proliferation of versatile Cuban imitations playing jazz, Cuban genres such as *habaneras, boleros*, and *danzones* and society dances such as the foxtrot (Evora 2003:156; 2003b:52). According to Alberto Socarrás, a Cuban flautist based in the United States from the late 1920s, one of the reasons for the rapid Cuban assimilation of North American jazz in the 1920s was a law passed by Machado which insisted on the use of Cuban musicians within American touring bands, though this benefited lighter skinned players only (Max

Salazar Interview; Díaz Ayala Collection). Or as Anselmo Sacasas, pianist with Casino de la Playa put it:

> The North American influence was evident. The formation of (Cuban) orchestras was a necessity'[48] (Padilla; Replía interview)

Although smaller ensembles such as quartets existed, most groups in the 1920s were generally of a similar size to *son* ensembles of the period - seven or eight musicians (Leymarie 2002: 79-80).The initial line-up of jazz groups seems to have varied considerably and it is not clear when the piano was first used. Initially musicians were meeting for jam sessions using banjo and *tres* (Acosta 2003b:51). Leymarie mentions that one of what she terms 'proto jazz bands', that of Pedro Stacholy, founded in 1914, included a piano and by 1924, Moisés Simons was playing the instrument in a jazz group at the Plaza Hotel (Leymarie 2002:79; Acosta 2003: 28). The piano was therefore already present before the swing-influenced expansion of the 1930s when jazz bands grew to twelve or more musicians with the addition of extra brass and, later, more Cuban percussion

A typical jazz group in the 1930s and 40s would comprise two trumpets, a trombone, three saxes, percussion (which could include drum kit, *timbales, claves*, maracas, *bongó*), bass and piano (Leymarie 2002:81). However this type of line-up could be augmented for specific musical effects such as the use of a solo violin in *Me Voy Lejos* by Orquesta Havana Riverside or a string section in *Si Sabes que te Quiero* by Casino de la Playa (Tumbao CD058). Due to their extremely varied repertoire of musical styles, versatility was paramount.

Acosta notes the parallel development of North American blues and jazz with *son montuno*, maintaining that the mutual enrichment of the genres, due to close geographical and cultural ties between the two countries, was hugely beneficial to Cuban music as a whole (Acosta 2003b:47- 51). It is certainly clear that musical trends moved in both directions between Havana and New York, firstly with American jazz bands touring Cuba and later with many Cuban musicians relocating to the United States. Much of the Cuban repertoire reached the United States within a very short space of time and was performed there with a great deal of stylistic licence. Xavier Cugat's 1937 recording of Arsenio's *Bruca Manigua,* for example, includes strings in the line-up and a *montuno* section performed considerably faster than the tempo associated with *son montuno* (Tumbao CD023).

This type of mutual influence can also be seen within Cuba between jazz bands and *conjuntos.* The gradual 'Cubanisation' of jazz bands in the 1930s was partly due to the increasing use of Cuban percussion; while the use of guiro in the 1920s can be seen as the influence of *danzón*, Orquestra Casino de la Playa's incorporation of the *claves* in 1936 was clearly *son*-inspired (Acosta 2003:18, José Reyes interview: 29.4.04). Much of this percussive expansion was due to the popularity of 'exotic' instruments in tourist cabarets - often as part of songs with Afro-Cuban religious themes - but was also a way of capitalising on the growing musical dominance of *son montuno.* However not all audiences approved of this tendency, in spite of their liking for the music. According to Anselmo Sacasas of Casino de la Playa:

[48] La influencia norteamericana era evidente. La formación de las orquestas era una necesidad.

> The Havana Yacht Club cancelled our contract because we were playing Cuban music - they wanted only polite waltzes and foxtrots, yet they would go across the street to the 'low' places to dance to native music (Sacasas 1968: 6).

Cuban jazz bands were performing many of the same songs as *conjuntos* - often written by working class *soneros,* as in the case of Arsenio Rodríguez - but with very different line-ups and arrangements. Both types of ensemble played *boleros, guarachas, afros, son montunos* and *congas*, though *conjuntos* specialised in *guaruacha* and *son montuno*, while jazz bands, with an audience that demanded more spectacle, played more *congas*, *afros* and *rumbas* (of the cabaret rather than street variety). Interestingly, the Spanish numbers - such as *paso doble* - and the European foxtrots and polkas, which jazz bands regularly performed, are not in evidence on the recordings of this period. Of the 180 recordings listed for Casino de la Playa by Díaz Ayala, there is one waltz and one 'bolero foxtrot'; the vast majority are *guarachas, bolero sones, congas* and *son afros.* Havana Riverside have one waltz and one *paso doble* out of a list of 57 recordings and Los Hermanos Palau have no European numbers at all. (Diaz Ayala 2002: search) This probably reflects the foreign (especially American) perception of Cuban music and the need to appeal to an international audience but may also be evidence of the lack of mass popularity for these genres.

However, it also reflected the fact that the specific audiences who had always attended live venues were not necessarily record buyers. Anselmo Sacasas played for silent movies in the 1920s:

> I worked in the Belgian cinema, near the railway station that catered almost exclusively for workers from the Spanish ships that came to Havana. Only *paso dobles, jotas* and Spanish music was played (Padilla: Replía interview)

Although many pianists moved between genres and types of ensemble, the movement between *son montuno* and jazz seems to have been the most common. The example of Pedro 'Peruchín' Jústiz who was with the *conjuntos* of Arsenio Rodríguez and Chepín Chovén before joining the Havana Riverside and Tropicana Orchestras, is not unusual (Leymarie 2002:136). Given the social and racial restrictions of the time and the 'white' profile of jazz bands it may seem surprising that a move to jazz was more common for *soneros* than moving to a *charanga.* However, musical factors remained paramount and jazz bands and *conjuntos* shared a common repertoire and stylistic features to a much greater extent than either did with *charangas.*

Arsenio Rodríguez worked as an *aseso*, a musical advisor, to Orquesta Casino de la Playa in the late 1930s, and this type of contact further encouraged mutual influence. He was initially more successful (beyond lower class black musical circles) as a composer and his songs were covered by other groups before his own versions became well known. Casino de la Playa (with Miguelito Valdés as vocalist) recorded ten of Arsenio's works between 1937 and 1940, well before Arsenio's first recordings with his own group in 1940 (Sublette 2004:444; Garcia 2003:109-110). The group also invited Arsenio to be a guest artist, playing *tres* and performing a solo on *Se Va el Caramelero* (1937), though as I noted above, he was never invited to play live with the group.

In this atmosphere of musical exchange, the growing prominence of the piano in jazz bands such as Casino de la Playa would have been noted by *soneros.* According to René Espí, son of Roberto

Espí (vocalist with Conjunto Casino), competition with jazz bands was one of the reasons behind the adoption of the piano in the *conjunto*:

> The competition was very strong....the rivalry on stage was what marked the evolution of the septet..... looking for greater possibilities, a stronger sound. The inclusion of the piano was to enrich the format, to enrich the sound; it was a product of this rivalry with the jazz bands.[49] (Interview 27.4.04)

Jazz bands provided evidence for both the social and musical advantages of the piano. The incorporation of an instrument associated with first class cabarets, whether in jazz bands or *charanga* groups, could be advantageous to a *son* ensemble. Musically, the possibilities of the instrument were clear, not just in general ensemble playing but in the potential for solo improvisation.

The Piano in Cuban Jazz Bands

There are very few recordings of 1920 and early 1930s jazz groups in Cuba as North American record labels, with access to plenty of jazz in the United States, preferred to concentrate on the more 'authentic' *son montuno* groups. It is difficult therefore to have a sense of the early role of the piano. Moreover, in later Cuban jazz recordings of the late 1930s and 1940s, the piano part is often obscured with the large brass section effectively covering much mid-range piano playing, preventing close analysis. Miguelito Valdés has described the conditions for the 1937 Casino de la Playa recordings:

> The recordings were made at El Montmartre night club. The walls were soundproofed. The microphone that was suspended from the ceiling over the band recorded the instruments and a second one recorded my voice (Salazar 1992: 12)

Another potential problem is the difficulty in making a true comparison between jazz bands and other types of ensemble during the late 30s and early 40s. The majority of recordings available for Cuban jazz bands (for example those on the Tumbao label) are taken from the late 1930s and early 40s - the period in which recording had just been re-established in Cuba. As I noted above, the *son montuno* and *danzón* recordings made at this time were of established figures such as Antonio María Romeu and *Septeto Nacional*, rather than either the new style *charangas* or *conjuntos*. The earliest recordings of *conjuntos* are from 1940, and Arcaño from 1941, well after the late 1930s jazz band sessions. Thus, musical innovation, which might be shared across genres, can appear to be chronologically earlier in jazz bands.

It is also important to reiterate that during the 1930s and 1940s, jazz bands were effectively show bands, and that jazz formed a small part of their repertoire. Acosta maintains that the true musical fusion that became Afro-Cuban jazz was taking place in the United States, while groups in Cuba had a

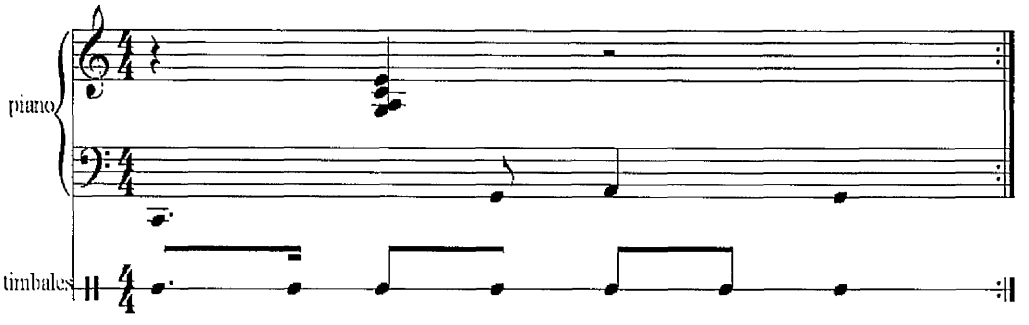
[49] Era muy fuerte, la competencia...esa fricción en el escenario fué lo que fué marcando la evolución del septeto.... Buscando mayor posibilidades grandiosos, una sonora mas fuerte. El inclusión del piano fué para enriquecer el formato, para enriquecer la sonoridad, producto de ese fricción en el escenario con los jazz bands

much more diverse repertoire and playing style (Acosta 2003:58) The piano style in the Cuban jazz band, therefore, was not clearly defined and the demand for musical variety meant that the instrument fulfilled a variety of different functions within the ensemble and pianists had to juggle a variety of styles and techniques.

Much of the jazz band piano style, particularly in the verses of songs, was clearly derived from *danzón:* for example arpeggiated harmonic accompaniment or melody/counter-melody in octaves on the upper reaches of the instrument. Sometimes this is no doubt deliberate as in Casino de la Playa's recording of Albardito Valdés' *danzón, Almendra* (Tumbao CD003). The harmonic, chordal and arpeggiated, accompaniment in the interludes is contrasted with the introductory section in which, after the first interlude, the piano provides melodic response in octaves to the opening statement. In both verse and *montuno*, however, constant change and variety was a feature of the piano style. In another example *Kuki,* a *son montuno* written by Arsenio Rodríguez and recorded by Havana Riverside in 1940, the pianist Juan Bruno Tarraza starts with a basic piano vamp in the opening section, moves through octave melodic and counter-melodic scales and, in the *montuno* section improvises freely using both chordal harmony and counter-melody (TumbaoCD 058).

For *congas* and *rumbas*, jazz pianists relied on a basic piano vamp, with the left hand doubling the bass and the right hand providing off-beat chords. Havana Riverside's *Mi Africa* (a *conga*) and *No te vistas que no vas* (a *rumba*) both conform to this pattern (Tumbao CD058). *Afros* are treated slightly differently; the classic *tango congo* rhythm, identified by Moore and closely associated with this style is featured on the *timbales* and underpinned by a half speed piano version of the rhythm (Moore 1997:73) This can be found in *Tu vera lo que tu va ve* by Los Hermanos Palau (Tumbao CD035). According to Tumbao, this was recorded between 1939 and 1941 but the Díaz Ayala Discography lists it as recorded in 1946 (Díaz Ayala 2002: search). I have transcribed the basic piano vamp together with the *timbales tango congo* rhythm (Ex 4.7,CD1:15, 0'09'').

Ex 4.7 Tu Vera lo que Tu Va Ve (1946) Piano vamp, tango congo rhythm

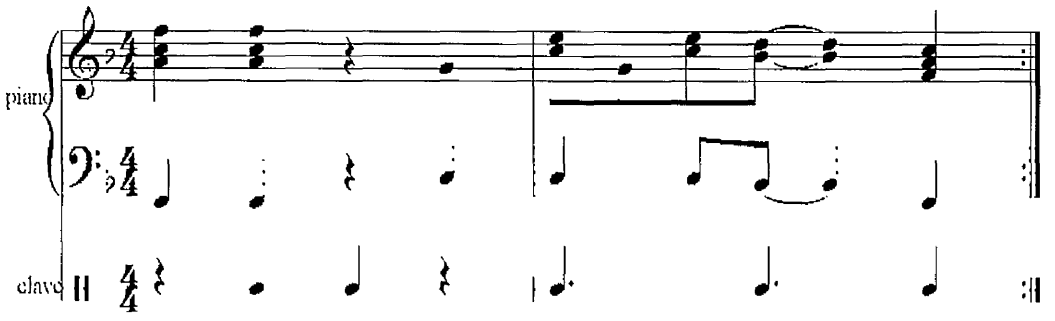


The influence of *son montuno* on jazz recordings is very strong in a number of ways. Structurally many numbers have an open-ended, call and response final section, not just those described as *son montuno, bolero son* or *son pregón* but also *afros* and *congas*. However the role of the piano in the *montuno* section is generally inconsistent and often semi-improvised, contrasting both with the *conjunto* and (new style) *charanga* piano, both of which establish a more regular ostinato. In some songs the piano takes on the role normally associated with the trumpet, alternating melodically with the

vocalist in call and response, for example in *Cuando vuelves a querer me* by Casino de la Playa, recorded in 1939 (Tumbao CD037). The instrument does not form a consistent part of the *tumbao* - the rhythm section of percussion and bass - which in the *conjunto* would include piano. Although pianists often include *montuno*-style ostinatos, which according to Mauleón were present and played with parallel hands from the late 1930s, these are rarely consistently played throughout the *montuno* section (Mauleón interview 18.4.03).

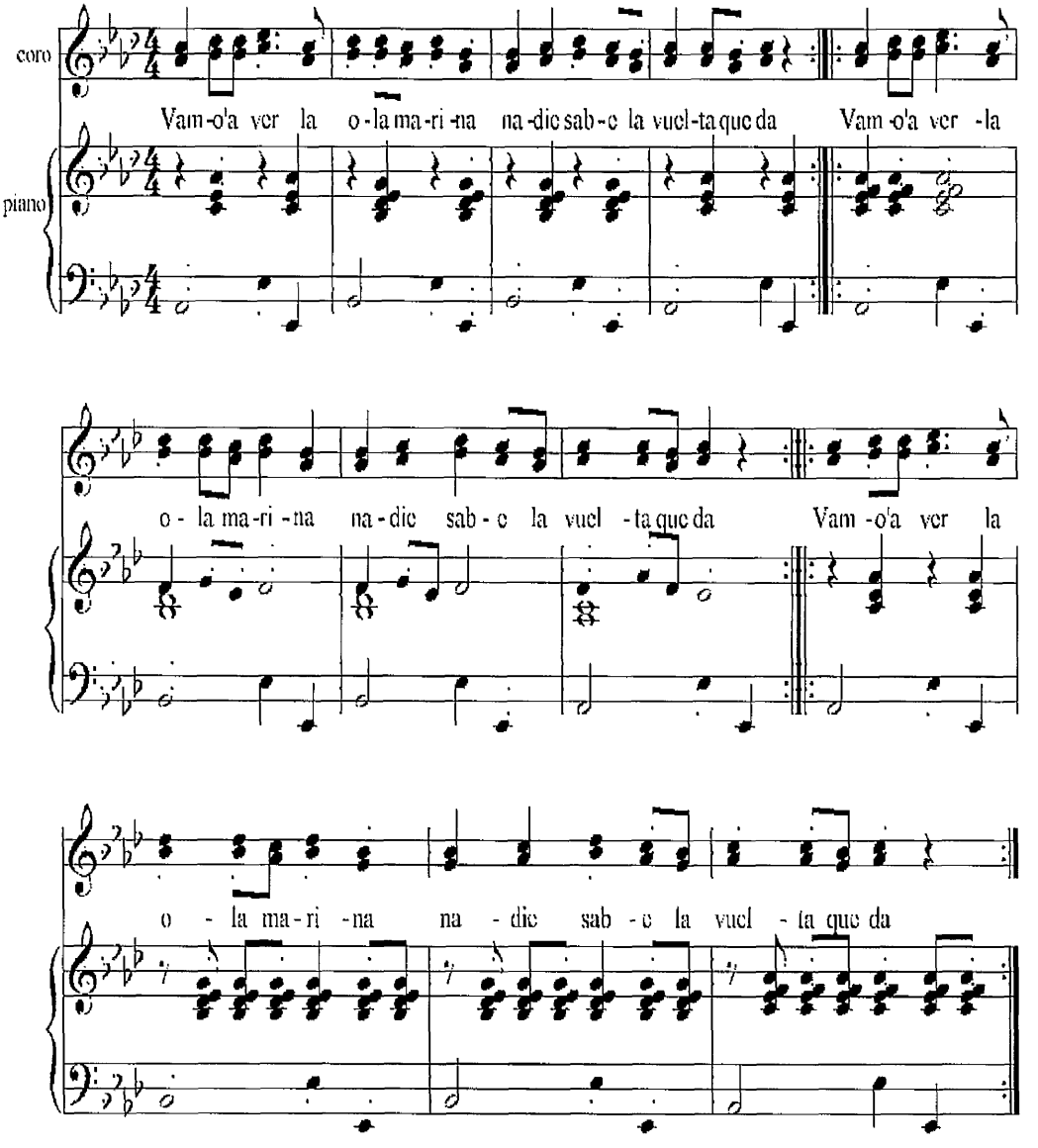
In songs with a verbal reference to *son* in the title, its influence is often clearer. For example *Nuestro Son*, recorded in 1940 by Casino de la Playa, displays a deliberate stressing of *clave* rhythm in the *montuno* (Ex4.8, CD1:16, 2'10'').

Ex 4.8 Nuestro Son (1940)

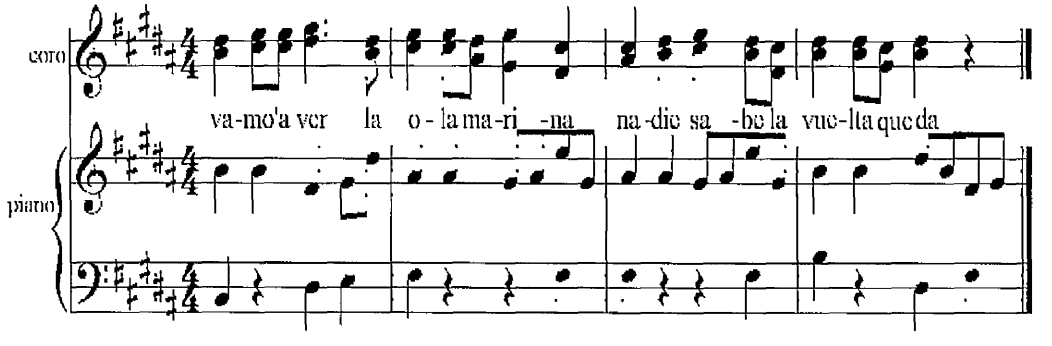


A consistent stylistic difference between *son montuno* and jazz is the greater use of chordal harmony by jazz pianists who often rely on a piano vamp in the *montuno* section. The difference in emphasis is clear if we compare two versions of Virgilio Gonzalez's *La Ola Marina,* recorded between 1939 and 1941 by Los Hermanos Palau and by the *conjunto* Sonora Matancera in 1944 (Ex 4.9, CD1:17, 0'05''; Ex 4.10, CD1:18 1'34''). In the following examples I have transcribed the basic piano ostinato in the *montuno* section, ignoring minor variations. Although both pianists reinforce the bass with the left hand, there is a clear difference in style between the two. In the Palau version, the pianist (unidentified in the sleeve notes) plays a basic chordal vamp on beats two and four for most of the piece, though I have also transcribed two variations. He provides harmonic reinforcement and some rhythmic variation but little melodic interest. In contrast, the Sonora Matancera version is much more consistently played. Lino Frías avoids block chords all together and arpeggiates the second half of each bar to provide melodic and rhythmic momentum between phrases.

Ex 4.9 La Ola Marina (Los Hermanos Palau. 1940)



Ex 4.10 La Ola Marina (Sonora Matancera 1944)



The Jazz band Piano Solo

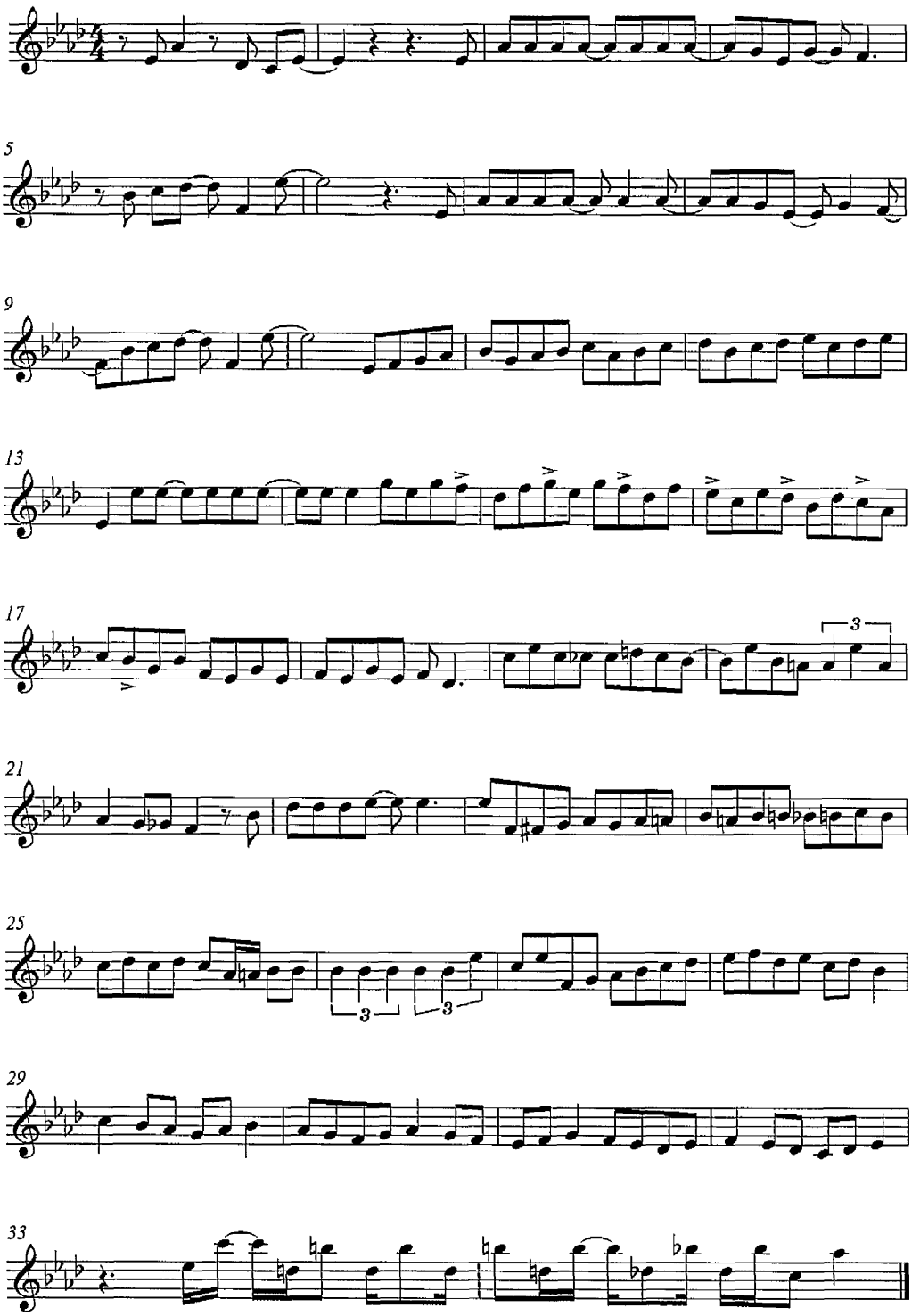
A much greater contribution of jazz to the *conjunto* piano was the extended solo improvisations, an innovation that helped to cement the position of the piano within both types of ensemble. As we have seen, Antonio María Romeu had been one of the figures to introduce the idea of the piano as a solo instrument in Cuban popular music and extended solos became a feature of jazz bands such as Casino De la Playa. Although *son montuno* had always been largely improvised, call and response in the *montuno* section - between *coro* and solo vocalist or trumpet - had been confined to relatively short musical phrases. It is clear that Arsenio Rodríguez was beginning to play extended *tres* solos as he was invited to record one for Casino de la Playa's *Se Va El Caramelero* in 1937, suggesting that he was also performing solos in his early *conjunto* engagements (Sublette 2004: 446). However, the musical potential of the piano as a soloist rendered it an essential addition to the ensemble; even Arsenio's very first recording with his own *conjunto*, *El Pirulero no Vuelve Mas,* featured a piano, rather than *tres*, solo.

Unlike the solos performed by *charanga* pianists such as Jesús López, piano solos in jazz bands were comparatively lengthy (though still constrained by recording limitations) and as a result were able to be more innovative in harmonic progressions, using chromatic movement away from the home key and full use of the length of the keyboard. However, as jazz band repertoire was the Cuban song, rather than the more harmonically complex North American jazz, they were performed over a comparatively simple harmonic background.

Solos were not an automatic feature of jazz band performance; Los Hermanos Palau, for example, have no piano solos in their recordings from 1939-41, reissued by Tumbao (CD035). Solos were however strongly associated with jazz band versions of *son montuno* as Arsenio's *tres* solo in *Se Va El Caramelero* demonstrates. Both Havana Riverside and Casino de la Playa, for example, restricted piano solos to *son* related genres - *son montuno, bolero son, son pregón* - and did not feature solos in genres such as *afros* and *congas*, even though these might include an extended *montuno* section.

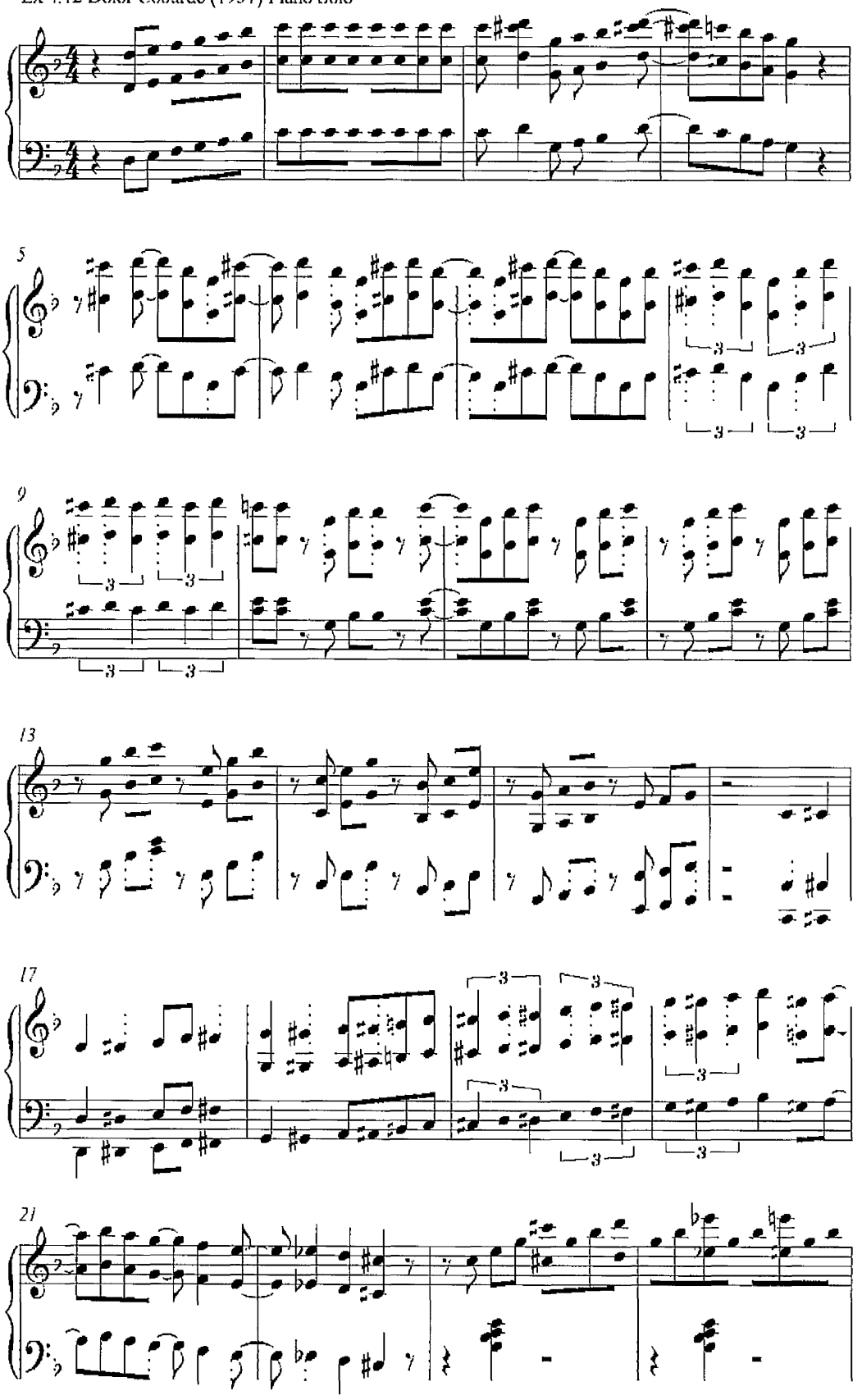
It is instructive to examine Arsenio's *tres* solo in *Se Va El Caramelero*, as many of its features were also part of the musical vocabulary of pianists in jazz and *son montuno* (Ex 4.11, CD1:19, 1'59''). The solo takes place over a tonic/dominant alternation of bars. Beat displacement and the alternative division of bars (for example in bars 15-17 or 30-32), strong chromatic movement (23-24) and percussive repeated notes (13-14, 26) are all present, and all of these techniques could be effectively used in a piano solo. I have transcribed the solo without including the octave doubling that occurs on some notes, to clarify its structure.

Ex 4.11 Se Va El Caramelero (1937) Tres solo

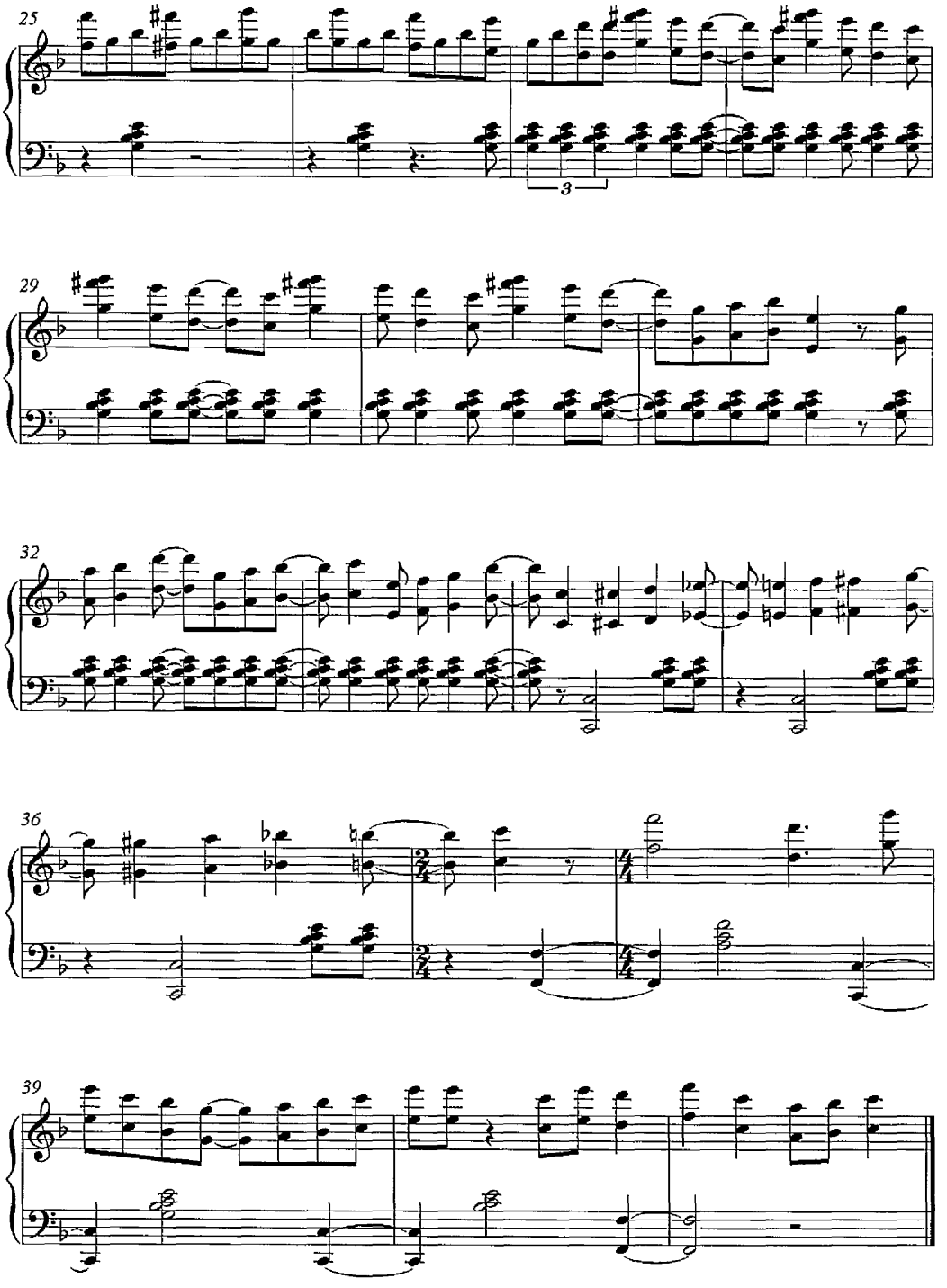


One of the first songs recorded by Casino de la Playa in 1937 was *Dolor Cobarde*, a *bolero son*, written by Miguelito Valdés (Ex 4.12) with a piano solo by Anselmo Sacasas (Ex 4.12, CD1:20, 1'59'').

Ex 4.12 Dolor Cobarde (1937) Piano Solo



2



According to Valdés:

> 'I wrote Dolor Cobarde, a ballad, and gave it to Anselmo Sacasas to orchestrate... When I wrote this tune, it was at a time vocalists and guitars would take turns soloing. Anselmo had another idea... He included a piano solo for himself and he told me that when he nodded his head, I was to stop singing. All of us remained quiet so the microphone hanging from the ceiling could pick up his solo' (Salazar 1992: 13).

And according to *salsero* Tito Puente, this innovation led to a structural change in arrangements:

> 'It was the first time I had heard a piano solo... it was a new innovation to me and it started a new trend in Latin music after this; arrangers included (space for) a piano solo in their orchestrations' (Salazar 1992: 13).

Constructed over an extended dominant seventh, Sacasas' solo is a virtuoso performance and shares many features with Arsenio's *tres* solo. Not only is there a strong use of chromaticism but it takes the listener far from the home key, for example in the ascending chromatic scale in bars 16-22. Sacasas takes the use of percussive repeated notes a step further with percussive repeated chords, bars 27-34. There is much alternative subdivision of the bar and a strong use of beat displacement to confuse the listener, above all in the extended section for bar 23 to bar 35. Indeed the inclusion of a bar in 2/4 towards the end of the solo seems to also temporarily confuse the rest of the band. In terms of range and power, Sacasas is able to make full use of the piano's unique qualities, particularly in octave doubling and strong, percussive offbeat chords, which serve to highlight the instrument's potential.

The solo was the one moment where a performer such as Sacasas could shine, albeit within strict limitations. He described recording conditions thus:

> 'At that time we had to be very careful because there was only one microphone to pick up everything; then, when I played piano, they would bring the microphone to the piano, I would play my solo, the best thing was to try not to copy what I'd already, it's hard....we had two minutes forty... in *descargas* now you can take three hours'[50] (Mamesy interview: 1988).

Although, as always, it is difficult to perceive who was influencing whom, a complex *tres* solo like that of Arsenio was extremely difficult to execute and could be more easily provided by the piano. The fact that Casino de la Playa was using Arsenio as a *tres* soloist in *Se Va El Caramelero* from as early as 1937, and the comparative ease with which a pianist could imitate some of these features, suggests that Arsenio's type of *tres* solo was a type of blueprint for pianists rather than the other way round. Although jazz band pianists were yet to fully integrate the imitation of the *tres* into their *montunos* to become a part of a regular interlocking *tumbao*, the *tres* solo suggested a way forward for soloing. However, at the time it was less calculated. According to Valdes:

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[50] 'en aquella epoca, teníamos que cuidar mucho por que había un microfono solo que recogia todo.... entonces cuando yo tocaba piano, me traen el microfono para el piano, yo tocaba mi improvisación , a mejor fue tratar de no copier lo otro que habia hecho, es duro.....tenias dos minutes cuarenta... las descargas ahora tu puedes tocando tres horas'

> 'Anselmo may have gotten the idea from Arsenio Rodríguez. On the day we were going to record Arsenio's *Se Va El Caramelero*, we invited Arsenio to the session. Anselmo got an idea to include Arsenio on *tres* guitar. Midway through the tune we reached a break. Anselmo nudged Arsenio to take a *tres* solo. Immediately after the recording, all of us congratulated Arsenio and Anselmo. We realised that Arsenio's solo was a historical innovation that had taken place in front of us' (Salazar 1992: 13).

In the solos of *conjunto* pianists from 1940s, the influence of these earlier jazz band pianists is clear. Rubén Gonzalez has spoken of memorising the solos of Anselmo Sacasas in order to imitate and learn from them (Figueroa 2004: 1). A style of soloing pioneered by a *tresero* had been transformed by jazz band pianists and subsequently became a standard part of the *conjunto* piano style.

Summary

Jazz bands in the 1930s and 40s moved in a social world where audiences demanded versatility and variety rather than the established and consistent musical style preferred by *son montuno* dancers. For this reason, their strength lay in their ability to adapt to many musical styles, and pianists were at the forefront of this versatility. Rather than joining the rhythm section in the execution of a regular interlocking ostinato to support melodic improvisation, pianists such as Anselmo Sacasas moved between reinforcing the *tumbao*, and supplying improvised sections themselves. While often imitating a *tres*-type ostinato, jazz pianists did not make this a consistent basis for their *montuno* style, as *conjunto* players would do.

The greater visibility and importance of the piano solo, however, was something that would have a strong impact on later *conjunto* piano style. Although arguably born out of the *tres* soloing of Arsenio Rodríguez, piano solos in the hands of players such as Sacasas, Pérez Prado and Juan Bruno Tarraza (Havana Riverside) became a simultaneously established and radical part of jazz bands' *son*-based repertoire. In a natural progression, this type of now jazz-influenced piano solo returned to become part of the *conjunto* style.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the dominance of *son montuno* in Cuban popular music from the 1920s through to the 1950s provided the energy behind musical innovation in other musical styles such as *danzón* and jazz. And although a clear line of influence is difficult to establish, many of these *son*-related innovations in other types of ensemble became decisive in the development of *conjunto*-style *son montuno*. For pianists, regular movement and contact between these different musical styles meant that new musical techniques could be rapidly adopted and re-shaped by other groups.

The introduction of an open ended *montuno* section in both *danzón* and jazz had required each type of ensemble to gradually re-think instrumental roles within the new context. Within both genres, the role of the piano had not been formalised and pianists had moved between melodic, harmonic and to a lesser extent, rhythmic responsibility. The establishment of the *montuno* section forced change in both the rhythmic role of the piano and in its interdependence with the rest of the rhythm section.

For *charanga* pianists, the innovations of the Lopez brothers in Arcaño's ensemble heralded the birth of a completely new role. Instead of being used as extra, fluid voice within the orchestration, often reinforcing existing melodic lines or harmonic fabric, the piano was now, in the *montuno* section

at least, officially a part of the rhythm section. A syncopated off-beat rhythm, played (chordally) with both hands in parallel, and interlocking with an independent bass line, became the basis for an extended improvised section. Harmonic progressions were more static and the melodic role of the piano was now limited to opening interludes and compressed solo sections.

In jazz bands, the role of the piano had been equally ill defined and the incorporation of a *montuno* section did not change this as radically as in the *charanga.* Pianists continued to improvise during the *montuno*, rarely establishing a fixed template and often resorting to a basic vamp. Like *charanga montunos,* jazz *montunos* were harmonic and chordal but they lacked the syncopation and strong rhythmic responsibility of the *charanga* piano. Nevertheless, the relative freedom of the jazz pianist meant that many different styles of *montuno* could be accommodated within a piece, though it was rare that either jazz or *danzón* showed the type of consistent arpeggiated movement of *tres montunos.*

The earliest recordings of the new style of harmonically and rhythmically free piano solo are from late 1930s jazz band recordings, and it was jazz pianists who popularised this flamboyant style. However, even here we can see the influence of *son montuno* in the way that the early *tres* solos of Arsenio Rodríguez were transformed in the hands of a pianist such as Anselmo Sacasas, thus establishing a new and exciting role for the piano in all genres.

In spite of social and racial restrictions during this period, musicians of all three genres worked closely together, mixing informally in recording studios and radio stations, and this type of contact fuelled innovation. The ongoing controversy over who invented the mambo - a *son montuno* rhythm (the *nuevo ritmo*) claimed and fore-grounded by *charanga* musicians and later given a jazz orchestration by Pérez Prado - reflects this closeness. It is impossible to fully establish the genesis of a particular style or technique, but *son montuno's* dominance in popular music in general was a strong factor in kick-starting musical developments in both *danzón* and jazz.

Musical innovation amongst *soneros* was thus closely connected with more general artistic currents. Constant syncopation and rhythmic interlocking with other instruments, the freedom to improvise within a basic template and the prominence of the piano solo, became part of the *conjunto* piano style and gave the instrument a more established and distinctive role. The emergence of the piano as a flamboyant solo instrument owes as much to jazz pianists in both Cuba and North America as it does to the increasing prominence of improvisation in *son montuno.* And while the influence of *danzón* is less clear cut, both the traditional style of musicians such as the *charanga* leader and pianist Antonio María Romeu and the later innovations of the Lopez brothers in Arcaño y sus Maravillas became integrated into a more consistent and structured *conjunto* piano style.

Chapter 5 The formation of the *conjunto* and the emergence of a *conjunto* piano style 1940-44

The transitional period in the development of the *conjunto*, from the late 1930s until the early 1940s, and the initial role of the piano within this new type of ensemble have received very little scholarly attention. As I discussed in the introduction, there is a perception amongst Cuban scholars that earlier forms of *son montuno*, from the 1920s sextet/septet period, are more authentically 'Cuban' than later, more jazz-influenced developments, including the addition of the piano. This perception, combined with a more general bias towards the folkloric at the expense of the popular in the literature, has meant that instrumental developments within the *conjunto* have not been examined in detail. However, recordings of early use of the instrument in the sextet (such as those of Sexteto Gloria Cubana) together with the first *conjunto* recordings, reveal the ease with which pianists adapted the instrument to the demands of the genre and rapidly developed a distinctive new style.

In this chapter I examine the expansion of the sextets and septets which led to the formation of the *conjunto*, and outline how this affected instrumental relationships within the ensemble, in particular the role of the piano, in early *conjunto* recordings. This expansion was not a linear process; nor was the piano a simple substitute for the *tres* but part of a more complex instrumental renewal and transformation. With this transformation came the establishment and refinement of structural norms, either retained from sextet-style *son montuno* or newly introduced, such as the extended instrumental solo. I provide extensive transcriptions of both piano *montunos* and solos in order to trace an emerging set of stylistic features and trends.

As I mentioned in the introduction, Arom's work on polyphonic instrumental music in the Central African Republic provides a useful approach to the transcription of cyclical ostinati, such as the piano *montuno*, and the endless scope for variation that exists within them. He uses the term 'model' to describe 'a visual representation of the features which are relevant within a given musical system'. It contains 'the 'essential properties' of the individual part, but is without ornamentation, allowing for multiple variations (Arom 1991: 137, 148). In the case of the piano *montuno*, the idea of a model provides a way of transcribing that avoids both the completely descriptive (which would include every variation) and the prescriptive (which in the case of *conjunto* pianists would be simply a chord sequence and possibly a bass line). A model of the *montuno* exemplifies its most important features without providing too much or too little information[51].

There are, however, limitations in this system with regard to the piano *montuno*. Firstly, Arom was able to record and transcribe many performances of the same piece in order to arrive at what he considered to be the essential elements of its constituent parts. With single recordings from the period, and with problems of audibility, I have had to transcribe *montunos* where they are clearest and to indicate where there is a significant change to the basic transcription, rather than being able to identify, with certainty, its essential elements. Secondly, with the limited number of harmonic sequences used in

[51] My transcriptions of piano solos are of course descriptive.

son montuno, each pianist could develop their own *montunos* and reuse them in different songs. There is therefore no set *montuno* for each song, and for this reason, the idea of a model is less relevant. Thirdly, as I show in Chapter 6, piano *montunos* can change and develop considerably over time, and my transcriptions can only provide a snapshot of the *montuno* at a particular moment, and not a record of an established version of an individual song.

Nevertheless, I argue that the idea of a model has merit. In most songs there is a basic version of the piano *montuno* that is heard at the beginning of the *montuno* section, and often again at the end of the piano solo, with variation in between. Unless stated otherwise, this is the version I have transcribed. Using the term 'model' to describe this initial statement provides a way of examining and comparing the overlapping and contrasting features of each pianist's style while acknowledging that the circumstances are very different to those of Arom.

The first part of this chapter examines the status of *son montuno* as the 'national' music and considers why the majority of groups would choose to replace one of the instruments most closely associated with the genre - the *tres* - and what musical advantages this would bring. The role of Arsenio Rodríguez in the establishment of the *conjunto* in the early 1940s has been stressed by the literature[52] and Cuban pianists themselves (Rolando Baró Interview 21.4.04). Although his influence was a strong factor in the acceptance of the piano in the *son* ensemble and he remains one of the most important figures in early *conjunto* formation, he was not the first to use the instrument in this context. Moreover, his was also one of the few groups to retain the *tres* alongside the piano. As we saw in Chapter 3, the piano had been present sporadically in *son* ensembles from the late 1920s onwards and although it was with the establishment of the *conjunto* that its position was assured, there were precedents for its incorporation such as the recordings made by the Sexteto Gloria Cubana in the late 1920s.

In the second part of the chapter, I examine *conjunto* recordings from the period 1940-44 and transcribe both *montunos* and piano solos in order to establish to what extent they reveal structural and stylistic elements that would become key features of the genre. The period covers the first recordings of all the main *conjuntos* of the early 1940s, up to and including the first recordings (as a *conjunto*) of Sonora Matancera in 1944. I clarify to what extent the piano *montuno* was based on the role of the *tres* in the sextets and septets and how this role was transformed with the new qualities that the piano brought to the ensemble, and I contrast specific features with what would later become a more consistent piano *montuno* style.

Although, as we saw in the previous chapter, there was a great deal of jazz and *danzón* influence in the development of this new piano style, the different instrumental line-up coupled with the legacy of the *tres* gave the *conjunto* a very different musical flavour. I argue that imitation by pianists of the interlocking arpeggiation of the *tres*, with its rhythmically distinctive method of harmony creation, confirmed the special status of *son montuno* as the 'national' music of Cuba and reinforced its sense of distinctiveness among musicians and audiences. Focusing on the function of the piano in a variety of *conjuntos* during this early period in the *conjunto*'s formation enables us to see that consistent imitation of the role of the *tres* in earlier styles of *son montuno* was already a feature by

[52] See for example Acosta 2003: 76; Leymarie 2002: 121; Sublette 2004: 478

the early 1940s. Although pianists were influenced by the instrument in other genres, this remained a distinctive stylistic feature that formed the basis for later developments in both Cuba and beyond.

5.1 National identity, *son montuno* and the development of the *conjunto*

The elevation of a specific musical style to become the symbol of a national identity was common in Latin America during the first half of the twentieth century. The creation of a national narrative demanded that a regional, class or racial identity was subsumed into a wider sense of national culture and 'In their search for the identifying factors of nationality... historians turned naturally to the musical expressions that defined more readily whole groups or culture areas' (Béhague 1991: 57). The new mass medium of radio played a key part in the dissemination of the chosen musical genre.

Interest in music as a symbol of national identity also reflected both middle class interest in popular culture and a nationalist reaction to North American hegemony in the region. In the case of Brazil, the promotion of Rio de Janeiro samba became the means for the 1930s Vargas dictatorship to unify a huge country, reducing other musical styles to a 'regional' identity (Vianna 1999:78). For the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic, support for the merengue, also chosen from many regional variations, reinforced both anti-American feeling and the patriotic status of the government (Pacini Hernandez 1995:37-41). Argentinian tango was, like *son montuno*, only accepted as national after foreign approval in the 1920s, and was used to cement the patriotism of a population largely built on mass European immigration at the beginning of the 20th century (Assi 2002: 25-26). In these countries, the 'national' status of the music came from its closer connection with folk and/or black culture and the perception that this was a more authentic reflection of a new, mixed national identity than musical genres based on European forms.

Son montuno has likewise been considered a more equal fusion of European and African elements, represented by the instrumental combination of *tres* and *bongó*, and thus a better representation of *cubanidad* than other genres (eg Manuel 1995: 36). Intellectual interest from researchers such as Fernando Ortiz and the artists of the *afrocubanismo* movement in the 1920s was followed by growing political and nationalist support, though never to the extent of Vargas or Trujillo; foreign acceptance and the tourist industry were a much greater factor in its consolidation (Moore 1997:104-106). Robin Moore (1997) has covered in great detail the growth and development of *son* in the 1920s and 30s, tracing it from a marginal black genre to its gaining overwhelming national acceptance and popularity. 'Black' musical venues - such as brewery beer gardens and Afro-Cuban social clubs - were joined by dance academies and political patronage in its growing promotion and dissemination, but it was the impact of radio from the first broadcast in 1922 that gave the music a national constituency (Moore 1997: 98-101,103).

Paradoxically, *son montuno*'s consolidation in the 'national' culture went hand in hand with a stronger (North American) jazz influence and the gradual elimination of unsophisticated, rural, but authentically Cuban instruments such as the *marimbula* and *botija* and, by the early 1940s, the *tres*. Moore argues that this was to maintain popularity in a cutthroat musical environment in which mainstream approval was paramount (Moore 1997:109,112-113). The piano itself already had a status

in Cuban popular music in general, and specifically in the former 'national' music - *danzón* - and was not seen as a foreign import but one of the tools available to Cuban musicians.

Turino uses the term 'cosmopolitanism' to argue that the imitation of foreign cultural practices can, over a period, be internalised and in the process given new meanings[53]. Thus, the use of the piano in the Cuban *conjunto* was not in any sense the imposition of a foreign musical instrument on a local style but part of a wider process of musical exchange. In Turino's analysis, nationalism is often in competition with cosmopolitanism but this does not seem to be the case here. Like the guitar in Africa, which, as we saw in Chapter 2, has been adapted to a variety of traditional genres normally performed on other instruments, the piano in Cuba could be adapted to many musical styles and, in the case of *son montuno*, became an (at least partial) substitute for the *tres*. In this process of adaptation, a distinctively Cuban piano style emerged. As Rene Espí put it, the piano was 'asimilado' in many different musical styles well before the *conjunto* and audiences were familiar with the instrument in popular music (Intrerview: 27.4.04). Moreover, the importance of the *tres* as a symbol of the genre was not as fixed in the 1930s as it later became.

Due to its physical proximity and economic ties to the United States, Cuba, to a greater extent than other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1930s, was dominated by tourism. As well as providing performance opportunities for professional musicians, this stimulated musical contact and competition between genres. Cuban musical styles and instruments were a source of national pride, but innovation was crucial in the musical market place and the piano was already showing its potential in other types of ensemble. Neither musical nostalgia nor nationalism could prevent the replacement of even the *tres*, the most 'Cuban' of instruments, but its influence remained strong within the piano *montuno*.

The Expansion of the Sextet/Septet Format

Emerging from the expansion of the sextets and septets, which had dominated the performance of *son montuno* in the twenties and thirties, the *conjunto* became one of the dominant Cuban musical ensembles of the forties. As I outlined in the previous chapter, it initially comprised the addition of conga drum (*tumbadora*), one or two more trumpets and piano to the original septet of bass, *tres*, guitar, maracas, *claves*, *bongó* and trumpet. There were variations, of course, within this format. Arsenio Rodríguez was the only major figure to keep *tres* and guitar, alongside Conjunto Los Astros and a lesser-known group, Conjunto Graciano Gómez (Interview Rolando Baró 21.4.04). Conjunto Casino lost both *tres* and later guitar, while Sonora Matancera kept the guitar, played by the group's musical director, Rogelio Martínez (Evora 2003: 60, Ledón Sánchez 2003:103). While a few *conjuntos* made use of instruments with jazz associations such as the trombone (Conjunto Saratoga) or clarinet (Conjunto Matamoros) this was not a consistent trend and there was clearly a desire to maintain a unique, distinctively *conjunto* sound by expanding just the trumpet section. The distinctive line-up of the *conjunto*, and its position as the successor of *septeto*-style *son*, meant that, in spite of overlapping in repertoire with the swing-influenced Cuban jazz bands, it remained a distinct format.

[53] See Turino 2000:7-10

Díaz Ayala describes the *conjunto* as a 'sofisticación del *septeto*' and the transformation was visual as well as musical (Díaz Ayala 1981: 201). As the previous chapter suggests, there were social factors that accelerated the use of the piano in *son montuno*. It was an indoor instrument, associated with first class cabarets and hotels, and had a certain social cachet and a visual impact. From a musical viewpoint, the external influence of other popular musical styles was an important factor in the development of a *conjunto* piano style and, while pianists also relied on imitation of the *tres*, the traditional foundation of *son montuno*, as a way of constructing a new role for themselves, they were very aware of other types of ensemble. The unique piano style which began to emerge in the late thirties and early forties was as much the result of the conflation of different musical roles within the *son* ensemble as the straight substitution of one instrument with another. In other words, as well as taking ideas from *danzón* and jazz, pianists took over rhythmic, melodic and harmonic functions from more than one source within the *son* ensemble - from *tres*, guitar and sometimes even trumpet.

This fusing and dividing of musical roles happened over a period of time and was not a clear linear process. Much of the literature stresses the substitution angle, interpreting the arrival of the piano as a replacement for the *tres*, the guitar or both (eg Davies 2003:63; Moore 1997:109). Given that the majority of ensembles did lose the *tres*, and many the guitar also, this position is understandable but it fails to take into account the musical roles fulfilled by those instruments and the way in which the new piano style transcended them. Moreover it ignores the complex interplay of *tres* and piano in the *conjunto* of Arsenio Rodríguez. The literature also stresses Arsenio's leading role in the establishment of the *conjunto* with the addition of piano, *tumbadora* and extra trumpets, but this downplays many earlier instances of similar instrumental growth and experimentation. The piano's eventual incorporation into the *conjunto* was not a linear or rapid process but rather a series of sporadic instances as part of an ongoing expansion.

The Impact of Instrumental Expansion and Improved Technology

The expansion of other instrumental sections had an impact on musical relationships within the ensemble, changing the balance and affecting the overall weight of the sound. The incorporation of the *tumbadora* also reflected changing audience expectations and a changing context. The growing use of Cuban percussion in cabaret-style *rumba,* and its overwhelming acceptance abroad, meant that hand-struck percussion instruments were seen as a novelty and no longer threatening. The continuing popularity of songs with Afro-Cuban religious themes in tourist cabarets cemented this acceptance (Moore 1997:105-106). Academic interest by figures such as Fernando Ortiz had also begun to change public perceptions; this was reflected in the 1935 inauguration of *Sensemayá*, a radio programme dedicated to Afro-Cuban culture (Sublette 2004:433).

Nevertheless, early examples of the *tumbadora*'s incorporation into *son montuno* ensembles suggest that black musicians, who were more likely to be familiar with *rumba*, led the way and faced early resistance. The first time that Arsenio Rodríguez used a conga in a *son* ensemble, the promoter initially refused to allow it and Arsenio had to insist (Salazar 1994: 16). Moreover, the instrument was being used in a very different way from its use in cabaret *rumba* - not for its visual quality or as part of a virtuoso display but as an integral part of the musical fabric, most importantly to emphasise the fourth

beat of each bar. In 1936 it was incorporated into the Sexteto Afrocubano and the Conjunto Azul (formed by Chano Pozo) was using five *tumbadoras* in the late 1930s (Acosta 2003:74, Roy 2002:132). Although there were stylistic differences between these and later groups who followed the trend, this change created a heavier sound in all *conjuntos*, putting a greater emphasis on lower timbres, and altering the balance between instruments. Arsenio also led the way in the popularising of the large *campana* (cowbell) played by the *bongosero* in the *montuno* section, which added further weight to the overall sound (Sublette 2004:480). This heavier percussion section demanded a fuller harmonic backing than what the (as yet un-amplified) *tres* and guitar could provide.

The expansion of the brass section likewise affected other instrumental requirements within the ensemble. The solo trumpet had roots in the *corneta china* of Afro-Cuban *conga comparsa* and carnival parades, and in the orquestas típicas of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the *septeto*, the trumpet took over some of the melodic role of the *tres* in the initial melodic statement at the beginning of a song. In the *conjunto* this solo melodic role continued, while a brass section, a sound more closely identified with jazz bands but distinctive due to the lack of saxophone or trombone, was able to contribute to the harmonic fabric. The Conjunto Casino added a second trumpet in 1937, 'para aumentar la sonoridad', and added two more when Roberto Espí took over as bandleader in 1940 (René Espí, interview: 27.4.04). This rich harmonic brass section and the complex trumpet counterpoint of the final *diablo* section in the *son montuno* of Arsenio Rodríguez (see Chapter 6) now required written arrangements (unlike the more informal earlier ensembles) and were part of the new bigger, heavier sound that again required a corresponding level of support that *tres* and guitar were unable to provide.

Technological change also impacted on the *conjunto* in a number of ways. Waxer has suggested that the amplified singing voice required a fuller backing and that this, as well as the wider influence of *rumba*, was one of the reasons for the addition of the conga drum (Waxer 1994:143-144). However vocal and instrumental amplification was a slow process, which coincided with rather than forced instrumental change. Although the first microphone was used in Cuba in 1926, as late as 1932 singers were still using manual megaphones to perform and the use of microphones was not widespread till the late thirties (Reyes interview: 29.4.04, Acosta 2003:54). *Tres* and guitar were not amplified with a pick-up until the late 1940s; Arsenio Rodríguez was the first *tres*ero to try amplification on a trip to the United States in 1949 (René Espí interview: 27.4.04, Rolando Baró interview 21.4.04). This gave an added attraction to the piano; pianists were physically able to increase the volume, and could augment this with the use of octaves or a higher range, and therefore had less need of electronic amplification.

The inclusion of Afro-Cuban percussion and extra trumpets altered the balance of the *conjunto* and created a heavier sound in which the piano was a logical addition. However, there is no evidence of a linear process that places the piano's entry into the ensemble after that of *tumbadoras* and trumpets. Nor was it a direct result of the amplification of both voices and other instruments, though this did gradually alter instrumental relationships. A general expansion of the ensemble, driven by the influence of other contemporary musical styles and the desire for musical innovation, meant that the piano was one of a number of instrumental additions jostling for position in the new *conjunto*. René Espí notes, the piano brought 'otras características a los grupos' rather than replicating existing ones, and much of

what became typical of the *conjunto* piano was not physically possible on either *tres* or guitar (Interview: 27.4.04). While balance was a factor, social and above all musical logic, including the influence of other styles, dictated instrumental experimentation.

The Musical Potential of the Piano in the *Conjunto*

With its eight-octave range and physical capabilities, the piano had tremendous advantages. Unlike *treseros* or guitarists, pianists could provide chordal harmony with the right hand while simultaneously reinforcing the bass with the left. Pianists could switch easily between block and arpeggiated chords and could state the melody while continuing with an accompaniment figure. Melodic or counter-melodic statement played in octaves and/or in the upper register, could cut through the instrumental fabric and be used in place of a solo *tres* or solo trumpet. While the more adventurous chromatic harmonic progressions were reserved for solos, and *son montuno* remained predominantly diatonic, the tonal range was considerably increased. The *tres* could only play three distinct notes at a time (given the doubling of the six strings) which seriously limited its harmonic capabilities even in arpeggiated harmony. For Rolando Baró the *tres* was 'muy limitado' and the piano had 'más posibilidades' (Interview: 21.4.04). Not only could a pianist play chords of seven or eight notes, they could also space them out over a huge range, taking advantage of the different timbres in each section of the keyboard.

Then there was the structure of the piano *montuno* itself. Its voicing echoed *tres* tuning in the regular octave doubling, particularly of the fifth of the chord, but the piano had more volume and force than the *tres*. Rhythmic accuracy was considerably easier for a struck, rather than a plucked string instrument and in the *montuno* section this would affect both the accenting of specific beats, and the rhythmic interlocking with other members of the ensemble. The continuing influence of Arcaño's *nuevo ritmo* (discussed in the previous chapter) encouraged constant syncopation within the rhythmic shape of a *montuno*, and the growing practice of the *bongosero* switching to a regular beat on the *campana* during the *montuno* section further encouraged this syncopation as a way of making the piano more audible between the *campana* beats. Strict rhythmic accuracy was thus paramount. Beyond that, the ability to add sporadic chordal harmony to the essentially fluid, arpeggiated *montuno* gave pianists a greater freedom of voicing and movement.

Where this range was more clearly in evidence was of course in instrumental solos. In the hands of a virtuoso such as Arsenio Rodríguez, the *tres* could provide a technically and musically assured improvisation, but few *treseros* were able to reach this level of technical ability. According to Arsenio's contemporary and fellow *tresero*, Niño Rivera:

> The *tres* is an instrument of few resources and, in order to sound distinct, you need a high level of creativity [54] (quoted in M.A Martínez 1988: 20)

[54] El *tres* es un instrumento de pocos recursos y, para sonar distincto, resulta imprescindible un alto sentido creativo

Although featuring the piano as a solo, improvising instrument was dictated by musical logic, the piano also had a visual, theatrical impact that the *tres* and guitar could not hope to match. Solo improvisation, which, in the sextets and septets, had been confined to call and response sections between soloist (either vocal or instrumental) and chorus, was given, in the *conjunto*, a much greater prominence. The solo piano improvisation, which became a set fixture in the musical arrangements of the *conjunto*, was greatly influenced by Cuban jazz bands both in its importance and structure. Its high profile in all styles can be gauged from the sheer number of well-known pianists who came to dominate popular Cuban music during the forties and into the fifties, such as Peruchín, Lilí Martínez and Anselmo Sacasas.

5.2 Emerging trends: *Conjuntos* and Recordings 1940-1944

For *conjuntos*, the early forties were lean years for recording, in comparison with the marathons that followed in the second half of the decade and in the 1950s. Although the recording industry was expanding rapidly, *conjuntos* were still reliant on North American companies such as RCA Victor, and the first Cuban label, Panart, not established until 1944. Nevertheless these early recordings provide the first glimpse of the development of a distinctive *conjunto* piano style that had been fermenting since the experiments of Sexteto Gloria Cubana in the late 1920s. While this was a transitional period in the development of a *conjunto* sound, basic musical structures were refined and stylistic differences between groups began slowly to emerge.

This section traces the fluctuating personnel and establishment of structural norms within specific *conjuntos* in the early 1940s, and I have taken as examples *conjunto* recordings made between 1940 and 1944. Given the difficulties of establishing some *conjunto* players, I have also cross referenced recording dates with Cristobal Díaz Ayala's Cuban Discography at Florida International University. This discography also includes detailed information regarding different groups and their development and, by focusing on changes in personnel and instrumental format, I have pieced together a picture of a diverse selection of *conjuntos*.

However, inconsistencies remain; musicians in some recordings, particularly pianists, have been difficult to verify. Direct comparisons between individual keyboard styles are therefore problematic. Nevertheless, I show that, while the versatility of different musicians was key to the success of groups, a change in pianist did not affect the stylistic development of groups. This is not to suggest that individual pianists did not have their own recognisable styles, but that both structure and format was flexible enough to accommodate them.

Early *conjuntos* and pianists

The first *conjunto* recording to feature a piano was Arsenio Rodríguez's *El Pirulero No Vuelve Más*, recorded in 1940 (the year of the *conjunto*'s formation), with Lino Frías on piano. This rapid move to the recording studio was unusual. Given the recording gap between 1930 and 1937, that I outlined in the previous chapter, and the subsequent choices made by RCA Victor, we have no earlier recordings of contemporary *conjuntos*, such as Sonora Matancera or Conjunto Casino who had already

used the piano. For these groups there was a long wait between their first use of the piano and their first recording. Conjunto Casino made their first recording in 1942, having had a piano in what was then the Sexteto Misquito from 1935 (Interview José Reyes 28.4.04). Having made some early recordings as a sextet in the 1920s, Sonora Matancera did not record again until 1944, having included piano since the late 1930s (Interview José Reyes 28.4.04). For other groups the two events were closer together. Conjunto Gloria Matancera formed as a septet in 1929 but made their first recordings as a *conjunto* in 1944, the year they first used a piano. Kubavana were founded in 1936 but likewise did not record until 1944, though it is not clear for how long they had incorporated the piano (Sublette 2004:484; Garcia 2003:127; Leymarie 2002: 68, 129; sleeve notes Tumbao CD 030, 034, 066, 114).

There are many recordings now available on CD from the 1940s, though they vary greatly in terms of quality and accuracy of sleeve note information. Moreover, the decisions on which songs to include can seem fairly arbitrary. The Barcelona-based label Tumbao is the most comprehensive, but Frémeaux, Musica Latina, NC (Nostalgia for Cuba) and Cuba's Egrem all provide interesting collections. David García of the University of North Carolina kindly made me a cassette copy of some early Arsenio Rodríguez recordings, very few of which are available on CD, and I even resorted to recording Arsenio's *El Pirulero no Vuelve Más* from a radio programme. Many lesser-known groups have had few re-releases on CD but I was able to listen to many of them on 78 recordings at the Díaz Ayala Collection at Florida International University.

Many *conjunto*s had fluctuating personnel in the first few years of their establishment, especially pianists. Arsenio Rodríguez had at least five pianists between 1940 and the arrival in 1946 of Lilí Martínez (who was to remain with the *conjunto* until 1967, well after Arsenio's move to the United States in 1951). His first pianist was Armando Valdés Torres, who did not record with the group, followed by Lino Frías (later of Sonora Matancera) then René Hernández, Adolfo O'Reilly (nicknamed *Panacea*) and Rubén Gonzalez, later to become famous worldwide as part of Ry Cooder's Buena Vista recordings (Diaz Ayala 2002, Sección 05R:2232) Gonzalez recommended Lilí Martínez as his replacement:

> Lilí Martínez took over from me with Arsenio. I said to him, 'Lilí, do you want to play with Arsenio because I am leaving? He said 'Hey, do you think I'll be up to it?' I said, of course you will. After that he turned into the best pianist with Arsenio (Rubén González quoted in Durán 1997: 16).

Lilí Martínez himself remembered it thus:

> At that time there weren't piano arrangements or specific parts, and I did an audition for him and it seems that he liked it as I remember that he called Antonio Arcaño, who had revolutionised *danzón* with his radiophonic orchestra, and said to him "Ñico, come and hear the dude that I've brought from the East". And in just a few months, all the dancers in Havana knew me and were stopping to listen to my solos (Quoted in Vazquez 1986:5). [55]

[55] En esa época no habían arreglos ni papel para el piano, y le hice una prueba y parece que a Arsenio le gustó, pues recuerdo que llamó a Antonio Arcaño, que habia revolucionado el género danzoneril con su orquesta radiofónica, y le dijo 'Ñico, ven para que oigas el 'hierro' que traje de Oriente! Y a los pocos meses todos los bailadores de la habana me conocían y se paraban a escuchar mis solos.

Without written parts, there was no need for pianists to recreate precisely what the previous player had done; rather, pianists would have to show what their own interpretation of the genre would bring to the group, something which Lilí Martínez was clearly able to prove very rapidly. The musical structure of *conjunto son montuno*, which I outline below, was sufficiently secure to absorb individual playing styles.

Alina Mendez also cites Evelo Cheveroti as playing with Arsenio's group in 1946 immediately before the arrival of Lilí, though he does not appear to have recorded with the group (Mendez/Perez 1992, Annexo 1:29). This constant change presents problems with the identification of players in recordings. David García has made a detailed listing of the recordings made by Arsenio's *conjunto* during this period, but even he is unable to confirm who is playing (René Hernandez or Adolfo O'Reilly) on the 1941 and 42 recordings (García 2003:541-575). Again this suggests that individual playing styles could be easily absorbed within the structure and were not always immediately recognisable, but it makes the comparison of these individual styles very difficult.

A similar problem arises with Conjunto Casino due to faulty labelling. For example, in four CD compilations which cover this period - *Legends of Cuban Music* 1941-55 (Nostalgia for Cuba G505025) *Mañana Vendrás* 1941-48 (Musica Latina 55005) *Rumba Quimbumba 1941-46*, and *Canción del Alma* (Tumbao 030, 040) the only pianist credited is Roberto Alvarez. However, according to Díaz Ayala, Alvarez did not join the *conjunto* until 1950 and Enrique Rodríguez, known as *El Diablo Rojo* and a self-taught virtuoso, played with the *conjunto* from 1936 until 1945 when his lack of musical literacy became a problem in the new age of written arrangements (Díaz Ayala 2002, Sección01C: 436). His replacement reveals the types of pressures that *conjuntos* were under. Roberto Espí, one of the vocalists with Conjunto Casino, described the situation thus:

> *El Diablo Rojo* wasn't a trained musician, he didn't read music, he was a pure amateur and the group had already reached a level of distinction and popular taste that we needed a pianist and arranger, because that's what the business demanded. Because in business, the development of the group and the demand we were in, we had to - painfully - because it's like in sport, you know, when a fighter or a sportsman is no longer ready physically for any problem, however much liking you have for him, he has to sit on the benches or retire. (Pagano interview 1989).

René Espí confirms that *El Diablo Rojo* played on the 1942 recording of *A Mi Que* but in later 1940s recordings it is more difficult to establish pianists (Interview: 27.4.04). *El Diablo* was not the only pianist to play for Conjunto Casino before Roberto Alvarez took over: he was superseded in 1945 by René Urbino, followed by Augustín Mercier in 1947 and Pepé Delgado in 1948 (Díaz Ayala 2002, Sección01C:436). However, I have cross referenced the dates of the 1940s recordings with Díaz Ayala's discography and this suggests that *El Diablo Rojo* played on all the pre-1945 recordings.

In contrast, other groups - Sonora Matancera, Gloria Matancera and Conjunto Kubavana - had a more stable line up, at least with regard to pianists, in the recordings that I examine in this section. Pérez Prado played piano for Sonora in the late 1930s (though without recording with the group) and was superseded by Severino Ramos, who continued as arranger after the arrival of Lino Frías as pianist in 1944 (José Reyes interview: 28.4.04). Frias played on the 1944 recordings and remained with Sonora

Matancera until 1976 and his lack of musical literacy never seemed to pose a problem (Diaz Ayala 2002, Sección 04M: 1721). Gloria Matancera's pianist was Alejandro Sosa who joined the group on its conversion from a *septeto* to a *conjunto* in 1944, and Kubavana had Eulogio Castelero until at least 1947 (Tumbao 066, 034).

The musical structure of *conjunto son montuno* and the role of the piano

The *conjunto* recordings of the early 1940s reveal, above all, that in spite of other influences, the structural legacy of the sextets and septets remained strong. The basic (introduction-*largo-montuno*) format of *sexteto* and *septeto*-style *son montuno* remains, and this includes the various other styles considered to part of the generic *son* complex: *son* pregón, *son afro, guaracha* and *guaguancó* (Alén 1998:78). However, instrumental expansion and the growing use of written arrangements gave rise to innovation. *Guarachas*, originally satirical songs in 19th century *bufo* theatre and played at a faster speed than traditional *son montuno*, had a verse/chorus structure. When played by *conjuntos* of this period, this could involve a verse followed by the chorus that would later form the basis of the *montuno* section, or a number of verses, both vocal and instrumental. Conjunto Casino, for example, would often have a brass version of the verse before the vocals (*A Mi Que* 1942, *Apretando, La Mulata Arrebata* 1943: Tumbao CD030). Sonora Matancera used brass versions of the verse, or brass interludes, as a way of breaking up a series of musically identical verses, as with *El Cuento Del Sapo* or *La Vaca Lechera* (both 1944: Tumbao CD114). On these occasions Lino Frías would move beyond the informal variation within piano *montunos* and provide new *montunos* for different sections. By the second half of the 1940s this practice was much more widespread and many pianists would construct a series of *montunos* for different sections (see Chapter 6).

Sometimes this verse and chorus structure involved a shortened *montuno* section before a return to the verse, which was followed by the 'real' *montuno*, for example in *Conjunto* Casino's *A Mi Que*. Conversely, many *sones* dispense with the *largo* section altogether and go straight into the *montuno*, something that had been a rarity before 1940 (García 2003:136). This is a feature of, for example for example Casino's *Naña Rube*, Sonora's *Gózala Bailando*, and Arsenio's *Dile a Catalina*.

The basic structure of the *montuno* section was for *coro*/solo trumpet alternation to be followed by *coro*/solo vocalist alternation; there would then be an extended instrumental solo, on piano or *tres*, a short bridge passage and either a short call-and-response section and/or a repetition of the opening trumpet theme to finish.[56] This placing of the instrumental solo at the end of the piece was a legacy of the Cuban jazz bands. In jazz band recordings of the late 1930s, the solo would be followed by a short section, usually a short brass phrase based on the introduction, which would bring the piece to a rather sudden stop.[57] Even Casino de la Playa's *Dolor Cobarde* finishes very abruptly after

[56] This was not always the case- for example in Arsenio's *Oye Como Dice* there is no instrumental solo and in *Yo ta' Namora* the *coro* continues throughout what is clearly a *tres* solo and not a call and response sequence. For a more detailed analysis of the structure of Arsenio's works, see García 2003: 137-141.

[57] Though there are examples of jazz bands also using a return to a call and response section such as *Eso es Candela* by Havana Riverside (Tumbao 058)

Sacasas' lengthy piano solo, with the final questioning four bar piano phrase (bars 38-41 in the previous chapter's transcription), answered by just a four bar brass phrase to finish (Ex 4.12).

One of Arsenio's most important innovations, the *diablo* section, restored the structural balance which had been altered by the inclusion of long instrumental solos. The style of soloing pioneered by Sacasas and Arsenio himself, in which harmonic tension builds over an extended time frame, demanded something more than simply a return to the previous call and response section or a short final brass phrase. In this sense the increasingly important solo improvisation had a direct bearing on structural innovation. The *diablo* section - an extended, contrapuntal, climactic finale for trumpets - is considered by García as Arsenio's 'foremost original contribution to Cuban dance music' (García 2003:141). It was not yet fully in evidence in his early recordings. A contrapuntal final brass section was present by 1943 in songs such as *Camina a trabajá* and *So Caballo*, but it wasn't until the addition of a third trumpet in 1946 that this would be fully realised (García 2003:183). In Chapter 6 I examine further the *diablo* section and its impact on the piano *montuno*.

The Beginnings of a *Conjunto* Stylistic Divide

Strong stylistic differences had yet to emerge between the different strands of *son montuno* played by *conjuntos*, especially with regard to the role of the piano. As I showed in the previous chapter, the movement of pianists between groups of all types - *conjunto*, jazz band and *charanga* - as well as between different types of *conjunto*, was commonplace during the 1940s, for both musical and economic reasons. The move of Lino Frías from Arsenio Rodríguez to Sonora Matancera would not have been unusual, nor would it have required much musical adjustment as Arsenio had not yet established the heavier, slower style of the late 1940s.

According to Angel Laborí, current pianist with Las Estrellas de Chappottín (a group originally made up of the remaining members of Arsenio's *conjunto* after his departure for the United States in 1951, and which continued his musical style under the direction of trumpeter Félix Chappotín) Arsenio had to adjust to a stronger, faster *son montuno* (and to the influence of faster jazz band tempi) on his arrival in Havana and this was reflected in the tempo of his earliest *sones* (Interview 24.4.04). *El Pirulero no Vuelve Mas*, his first recording, and other recordings of the early 1940s are considerably faster than the post-1945 recordings. *Pirulero* has 224 beats per minute, *Yo 'ta 'namora*, (also 1940) 160 b/pm, *Corazón de Hielo* (1941) 162 b/pm and *Oye Como Dice* (1943) has 144 b/pm, similar to the tempi in the *son montuno* of other *conjuntos*.

In contrast, the majority of the post-1945 recordings have a far more leisurely tempo, rarely going over 140 beats per minute. Arsenio's slower and heavier *sonero* style developed during the second half of the 1940s, influencing later *conjuntos*. Only one of the *conjuntos* that both Reyes and García describe as playing in this style - Los Astros - was established before 1950, with Conjunto Bolero, Las Estrellas de Chappotín, Conjunto Modelo and Las Estrellas de Chocolate following in the 1950s (Reyes interview: 28.4.04). In the early 1940s, a lighter style predominated and a strong divide between different types of *conjunto* was yet to be felt.

However, if some stylistic differences were less pronounced in the earlier recordings, Arsenio's retention of the *tres* alongside the piano in the *conjunto* line-up mean that there was always a

very different timbre in his *conjunto* from that in other groups and the role of the piano was potentially very different within this instrumental format. I will cover the stylistic divide between *guaracheros* (*conjuntos* who performed the lighter *guarachas*) and *soneros* (*conjuntos* such as that of Arsenio Rodríguez, performing *son montuno* and *guaguancó*) in more detail in the next chapter. However, it is important to trace its early manifestations and the extent to which it affected the role of the piano in both *tumbaos* and solo sections

5.3 The role of the piano in *conjunto* recordings 1940-44

The role and function of the piano in early *conjunto* recordings is very fluid and reflects both the multiple influences that pianists drew on, and the equally less formally established role of the instrument within other genres. Given its unsettled and improvised nature, any observations with regard to the early *conjunto* piano must be tentative; different pianists developed different stylistic traits and often experimented with many different approaches within one song. With the loss of the *tres* in the majority of *conjuntos*, pianists covered many of its functions within the ensemble but were not restricted to this. In contrast to the imitation of the *tres* in the *montuno* section where *conjunto* pianists were continuing an established technique, a new florid style of playing emerged in the *largo* section that was new to *son montuno*.

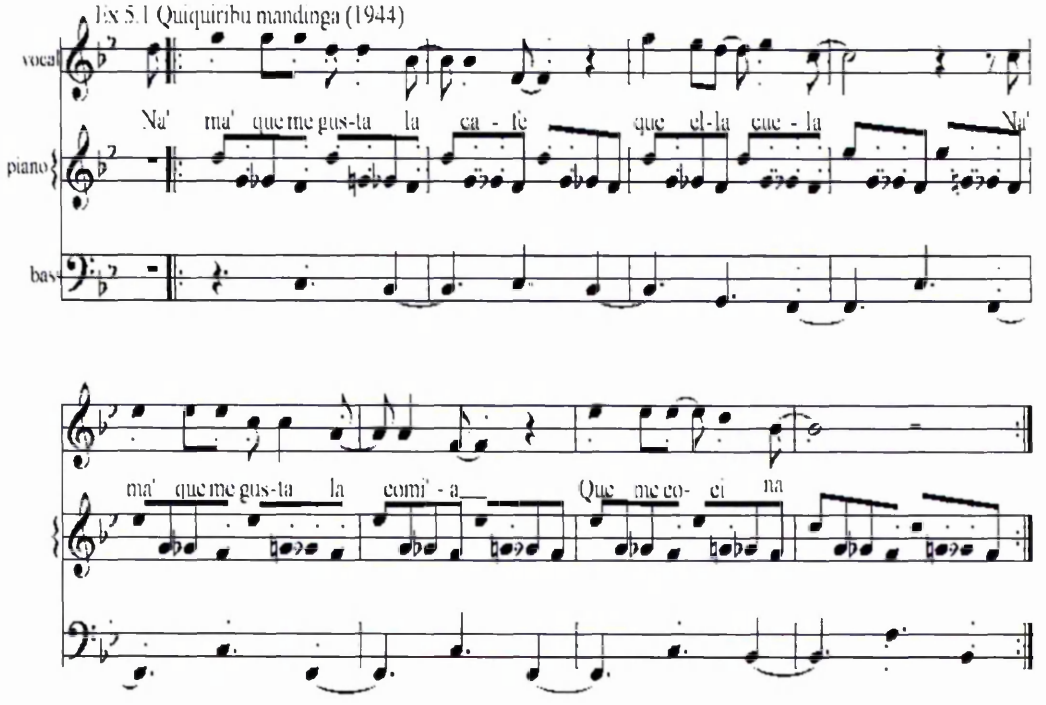
In this section I examine in detail the way the piano was used in these early *conjunto* recordings. I establish how much of this new style was based on imitation - of the *tres* or of the piano role in jazz and *danzón* - and what features emerged from these multiple influences. Moreover, in the light of the later development and establishment of a stricter piano *montuno* style, it is instructive to see to what extent its identifying features - for example a strict adherence to *clave*, staggered anticipation with the bass, hands playing in parallel, counter-melody in octaves and constant arpeggiation - were already present. I look at six main areas within the piano *montuno*: the fluid movement between different techniques within a section and the frequent use of chromaticism within this more florid style; the use of a more chordal vamp; *clave* and anticipation. arpeggiation; the development of a counter-melodic style, isolated or within an arpeggiated *montuno*; the combination of piano and *tres* in the work of Arsenio Rodríguez.

Stylistic Freedom and Fluidity

The influence of both *danzón* and jazz was particularly strong in the *largo* sections of songs but was clear throughout. As I showed in the previous chapter, both styles had already developed a florid, often chromatic piano style which was improvised freely by pianists. Even after Arcaño's innovations in the late 1930s in which a stricter *montuno* section piano style emerged, a great deal of freedom remained in earlier sections. This type of playing was taken up by *conjunto* pianists, most frequently in the *largo* section, and represented a new departure in *son montuno*. Two features in particular were the frequent use of fast chromatic scales, something difficult to achieve on *tres*, and the unexpected movement between different techniques.

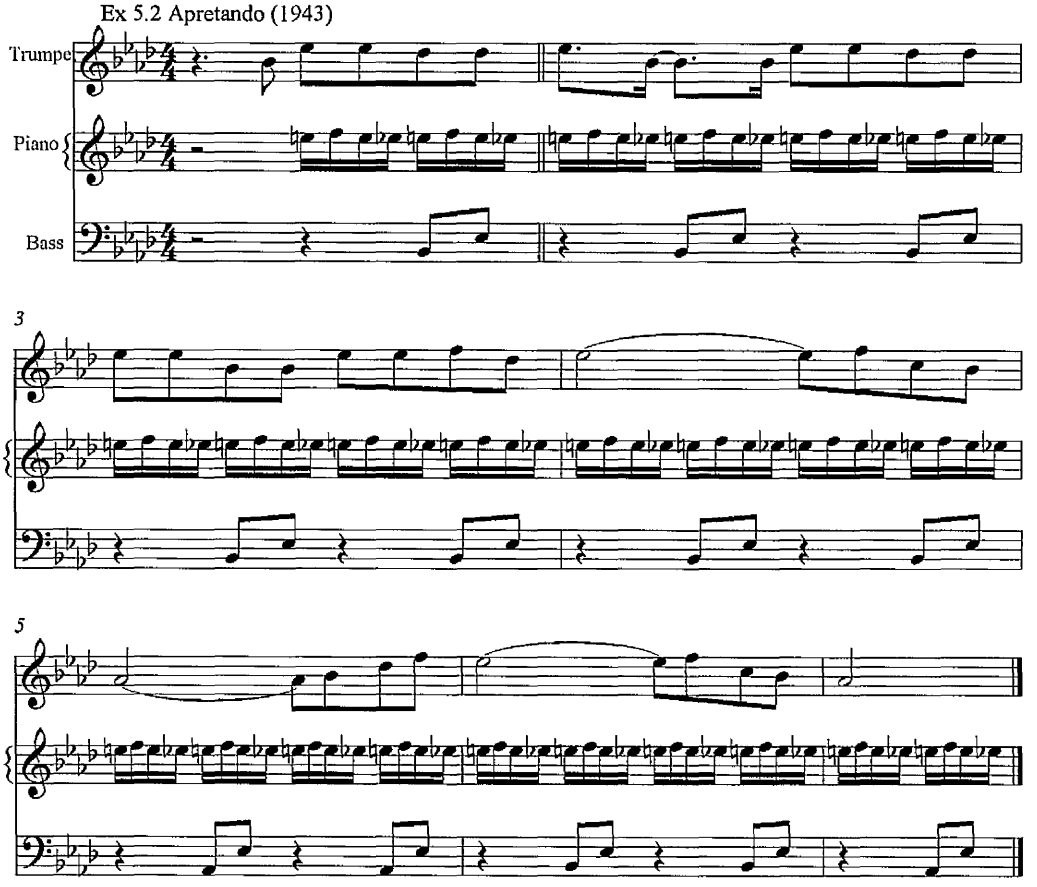
Conjunto Casino with *El Diablo Rojo* on piano

The fluidity of the chromatic ostinato in the second verse of *Quiquiribú Mandinga* for example, recorded by Conjunto Casino in 1944 with *El Diablo Rojo* on piano, could not have been achieved on a plucked string instrument and echoes the use of piano in the 1928 Gloria Cubana recordings. In example 5.1, I show the piano right hand ostinato with the vocal melody and bass (CD2:1, 2'10'').



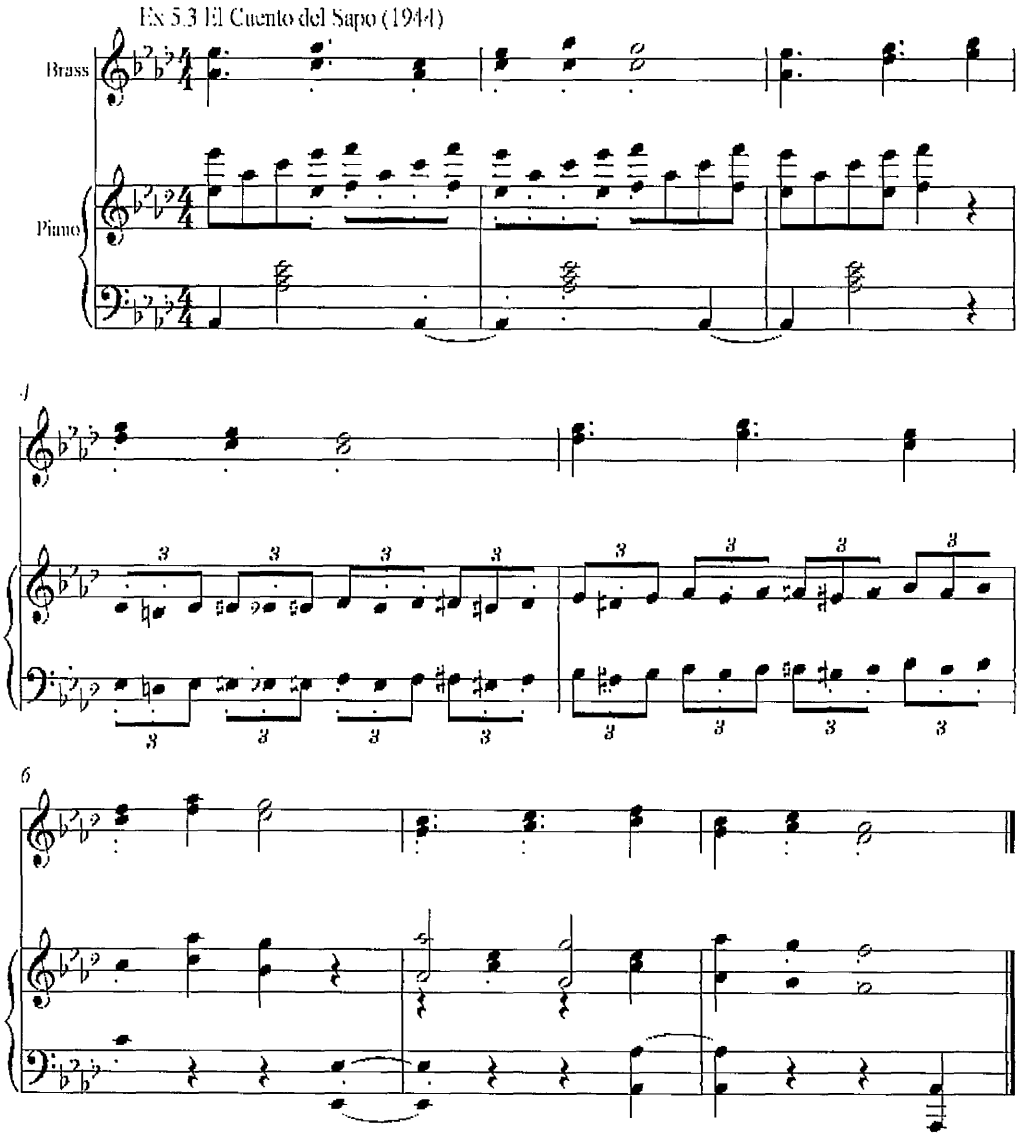
A similar technique is used to create a dominant pedal in the second half of the opening trumpet interlude in *Apretando*, recorded by Conjunto Casino in 1943 with *El Diablo Rojo* on piano (Ex 5.2, CD2:2, 0'25'').

Ex 5.2 Apretando (1943)



El Cuento del Sapo (Ex 5.3, CD2:3 0'52'') recorded by Sonora Matancera in 1944, as well as presenting another example of a chromatic style, also shows the freedom pianists had to move between different types of accompaniment within a short section. The song has six verses before the *montuno* section. The fourth is an instrumental brass interlude and in it the pianist Lino Frías moves between two styles, interrupting a combination of left hand bass and chords and right hand arpeggiated octave ostinato (in which the bass is anticipated) to briefly introduce a rising chromatic scale in both hands before returning to the original vamp, again something that would be impossible to play on a *tres*.

Ex 5.3 El Cuento del Sapo (1944)

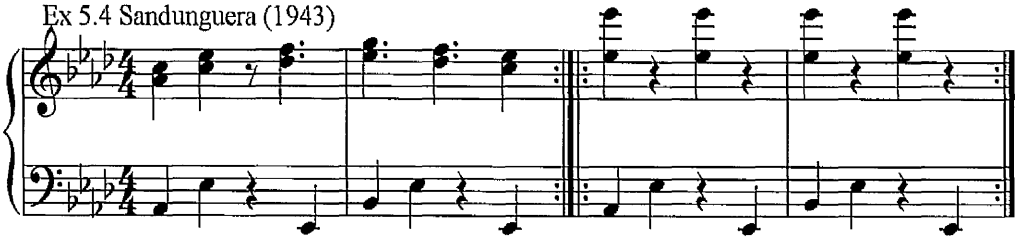


A feature of later *son montuno* piano style, in the *montuno* section at least, is a much greater level of consistency; the piano is considered part of the rhythm section and, as such, is expected to 'lock in' rhythmically with the other members. This was also the case in the *montuno* section of Arcaño's *danzón*; the strings were a part of an interlocking rhythmic *tumbao* and the pianist had to be faithful to their written arrangements. In the early *conjunto*, pianists maintained more freedom in both *largo* and *montuno* and, as the above example shows, the establishment of an arpeggiated *montuno*-like ostinato (whether in the *largo* section or *montuno* section) did not guarantee its consistent repetition.

Even in a situation where a greater level of consistency would be expected, such as in the *tres*/piano combination of Arsenio Rodríguez, a greater stylistic variety within sections was still in evidence. In the *montuno* section of Arsenio's *Sandunguera*, for example (Ex 5.4, CD2:4, 1'10") pianist Adolfo O'Reilly (known as *Panacea*) moves between a rising counter-melody in thirds (heard at the beginning of the *montuno* section) and an upper register dominant pedal note (heard at the beginning of the *coro*/solo vocal alternation) while his left hand reinforces the bass. Sublette maintains

that in the second example, *Panacea* is deliberately locking in with, or imitating, the *campana*, a relatively new addition in the *conjunto* which was also played strictly on the beat. This is borne out by its timing: the change occurs when the trumpet/*coro* alternation becomes solo vocal/*coro* alternation, traditionally the moment when the *bongosero* switches to *campana.* Although not as dramatic as *Cuento del Sapo,* shown above, it shows the relative freedom enjoyed by pianists, even within the *montuno* section. It also underlines how much pianists were using the imitation of other instruments, not just the *tres* (which was of course still present in this ensemble) as a starting point for constructing a role.

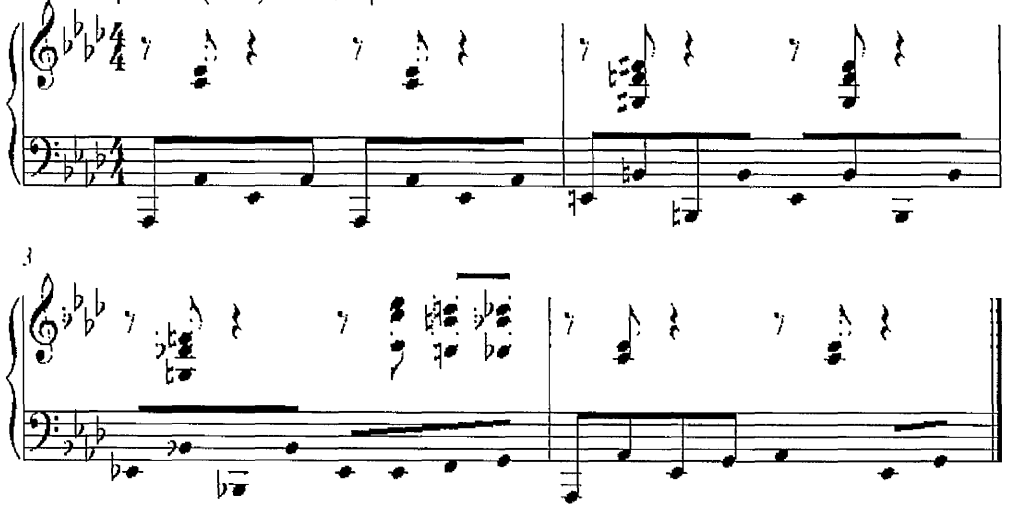
Ex 5.4 Sandunguera (1943)



Chordal harmony, vamp and the *son afro*

In contrast to the florid and less formalised *danzón*-influenced piano style, a simple and more consistent piano vamp, common in jazz bands, also featured in both verse and *montuno* sections. There are vamps for example in Conjunto Kubavana's *Cosas de la Calle*, recorded in 1944, *A Mi Que*, recorded by Conjunto Casino in 1941 and in the introduction to Casino's *Apretando* (Ex 5.5, CD2:2) this one demonstrating a more complex type of harmonic progression, more easily played by piano than *tres*.

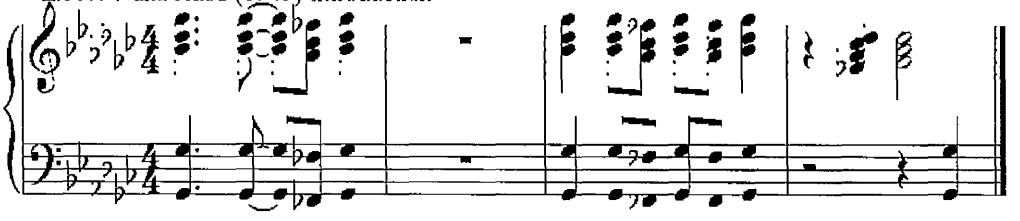
Ex 5.5 Apretando (1943) Piano vamp



This type of chord-based piano playing was a regular feature of *son afros*, songs which alluded verbally, and sometimes musically, to Afro-Cuban culture and religion, as it fitted better with their slower, heavier feel. Still part of the overall *son* genre, and usually structured with a *largo* and *montuno* section, these songs contained specific signifying features such as a slower tempo, more chordal piano harmony and being based around one (usually minor) tonic harmonic cell, with an emphasis on the flattened 7th, rather than a tonic/dominant alternation in the *montuno* section.[58] Ironically, this genre was a staple of the (largely white) jazz bands, and songs such as Margarita Lecuona's *Babalú* and Arsenio's *Bruca Manigua* had become popular as a part of tourist-orientated cabaret shows (Moore 1997: 78, Acosta interview 11/7/02). However, as I noted in the previous chapter, genres were not limited to different types of ensemble and *afros* were also part of the *conjunto* repertoire, though not so consistently. Sonora Matancera, for example, recorded almost entirely *guarachas* in the early 1940s and did not record an *afro* until 1947 with *Cabio sile Changó* (Díaz Ayala 2002: search).

As with the more basic piano vamp, the pianists in *conjunto afros* followed the example of pianists in Cuban jazz band pianists. *Naña Rube*, recorded in 1943 by Conjunto Casino (Ex 5.6 CD2:5) presents a slower, more chordal piano style and, although in the major, the flattened seventh is highlighted in both the harmonic progression and in the top line of the vocals. The dramatic piano introduction again reinforces the greater versatility of the instrument in comparison with the *tres*.

Ex 5.6 Naña Rube (1943) Introduction



***Clave* and Anticipation**

In both the chordal *afro* style of playing and in the more arpeggiated style of *conjunto* pianists, a greater level of syncopation and attention to *clave* suggest that Arcaño's innovations with the *nuevo ritmo* (outlined in the previous chapter) although contemporaneous with late 1930s *conjunto* developments, were influencing *conjunto* pianists. As I discussed in Chapter 3, *soneros* of the 1920s had a flexible relationship with the *clave* rhythm and, while it was not automatically strictly adhered to, neither was it contradicted by rhythms clearly 'out of *clave*'. The influence of *rumba* and its complex *clave*-based rhythmic counterpoint had an ongoing impact on *clave* awareness and this was joined by

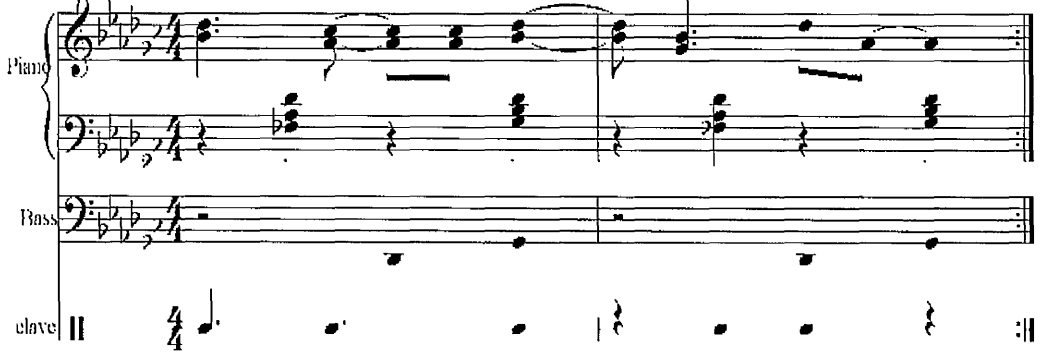
[58] The now-frequent practice of including a short percussion-only section in 6/8 time to signify Afro-Cuban culture was still very rare during the 1940s. The only example I have been able to find is Conjunto Niagara's *Abasi-Abacua*, recorded in 1945 and described as a *guaracha* (Tumbao TCD068, track 6). The 6/8 section is virtually percussion only but includes bass and, later, solo trumpet.

the strict adherence to *clave* seen in Arcaño's work, an inheritance from the strict use of the *banqueato* rhythm in earlier versions of *danzón*. However adherence to *clave* is still more sporadic in these *conjunto* recordings; while the *clave* rhythm still does not automatically dictate other rhythmic relationships, its influence is often present in the rhythmic outline of *montunos*.

Likewise, while the bass is not always in the classic anticipated bass rhythm (the *tresillo* rhythm with the final crotchet tied), anticipation is often implied in the avoidance of the first beat, the shared stress on the fourth or in the staggered anticipation between bass and piano. Although the use of anticipation was fortified by *rumba* influence with its strong sense of *clave*, there are many instances here of anticipation without a sense of *clave*.

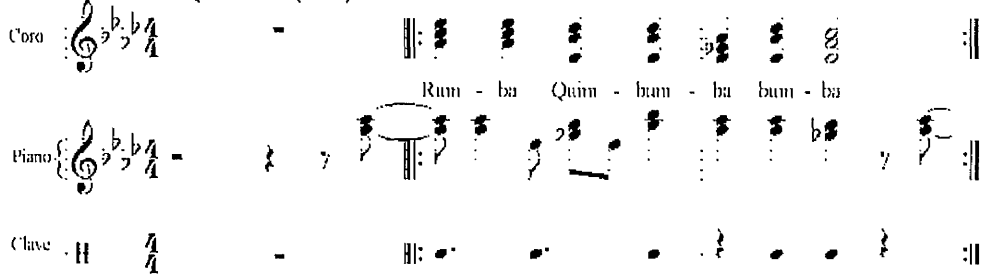
Although the piano *montuno* in the *son afro* conformed to a more chordal style and did not include the type of arpeggiated *montunos* associated with *son montuno* or *guaracha*, this did not preclude *clave* awareness. The piano *montuno* for *Naña Rube* (heard from immediately after the introduction, as there is no *largo* section) although based around block chords, has a syncopated right hand phrase in thirds, reinforcing the (3:2) *clave*, in contrast with the off beat left hand (Ex 5.7, CD2:5, 0'06'')

Ex 5.7 Naña Rube (1943)



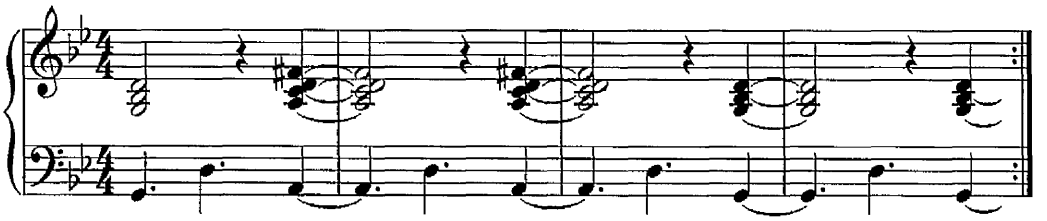
Rumba Quimbumba and *Quiquiribu Mandinga*,n two more *afros*, recorded by Conjunto Casino in 1943 and 1944 respectively, present examples of the varied use of anticipation. *Rumba Quimbumba* has no consistent piano *montuno*, played throughout, but different versions during different parts of the *montuno* section. With the start of the solo trumpet/*coro* alternation, the piano moves to emphasise the high register of the instrument for three repetitions, following the vocals closely but anticipating them at the beginning of the phrase; unfortunately the bass is inaudible in this recording and it is impossible to know if it also anticipates (Ex 5.8, CD2:6, 2'07'').

Ex 5.8 Rumba Quimbumba (1943)



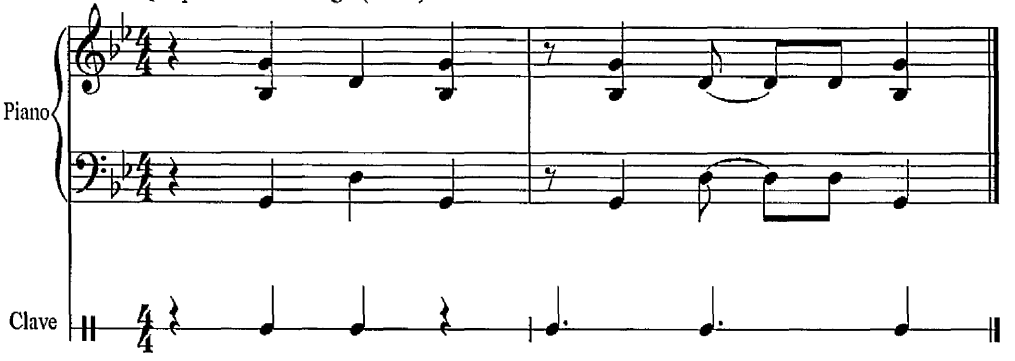
The more chordal piano vamp style was also used in reinforcement of fourth crotchet anticipation that had become a feature of some vocal lines in 1920s *son montuno*, as well as the basis for the anticipated bass. In the *montuno* section of *Quiquiribú Mandinga*, *El Diablo* doubles the (anticipated) bass line with the left hand while reinforcing the anticipation rhythmically and harmonically with the right (Ex 5.9, CD2:1, 1'16'').

Ex 5.9 Quiquiribu Mandinga (1944) Piano Vamp



Even if not clearly stated during the song, the concept of *clave* is clearly present in some song introductions, for example as part of a common introductory phrase (also popular in Cuban jazz bands and *charangas*; see chapter 4, Ex 4.1) in the introduction to Conjunto Casino's *Quiquiribú Mandinga* (Ex 5.10)

Ex 5.10 Quiquiribu Mandinga (1944) Piano Introduction



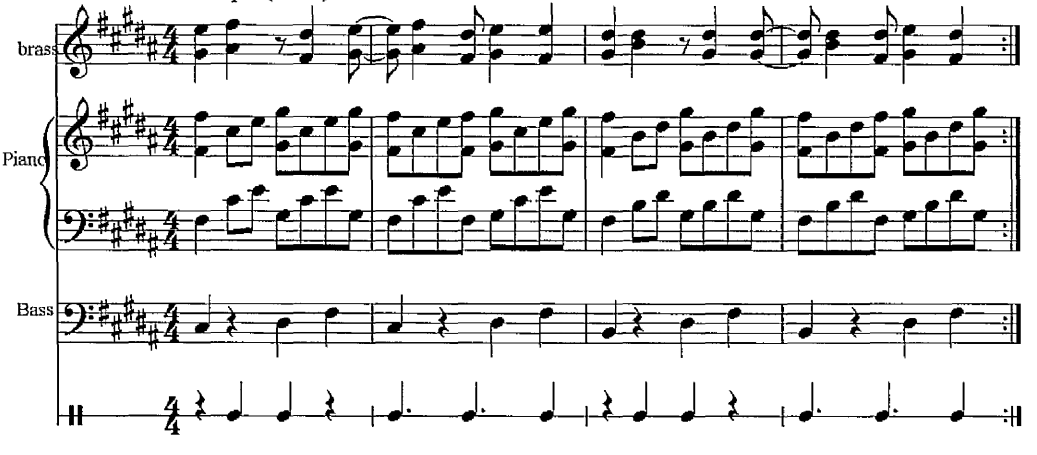
The arpeggiated piano *montuno*

In spite of the regular use of chordal harmony and the influence of jazz bands, the most distinctive element of the *conjunto* piano was the use of constant arpeggiation, pioneered by *treseros* in *changüi*, and consolidated in the sextets and septets of the 1920s. As with the more chordal style of playing found in *afros*, an avoidance of the first beat of the bar, a more constant syncopation of the arpeggiated rhythm and the stressing of the *clave* suggest the influence of Arcaño, but the relentless arpeggiation is unique to the *conjunto*. The doubling of left and right hand in parallel, something that was used to emphasise melodic lines in early experimentation with the piano, such as that of Sexteto Gloria Cubana, is now frequently used in the reinforcement of piano *montuno*s. Although emphasising the same key moments in the cycle as the more chordal style of playing, the more arpeggiated style maintains the fluidity of the *tres montuno* while giving octave emphasis in the right hand to beats such as the *bombo* note or quaver anticipation.

In *El Cheque*, recorded by Sonora Matancera in 1944, there are three distinct piano *montuno*s; a chromatic ostinato in the short *montuno* section before the return to the verse, a more consistent *montuno* which continues from the start of the *montuno* section proper until the piano solo, and a third in the short closing section. Transcription 5.11 shows this second arpreggiated but less syncopated *montuno*. The more syncopated trumpets are clearly in *clave*, and provide the rhythmic anticipation at the end of the 1st and 3rd bars, but the piano has a more straightforward arpeggiation, doubled in the left and right hands, and acknowledges the 2:3 *clave* only in pausing on a crotchet at the beginning of the sequence, thus giving emphasis to the second crotchet (CD2:7, 1'09'').

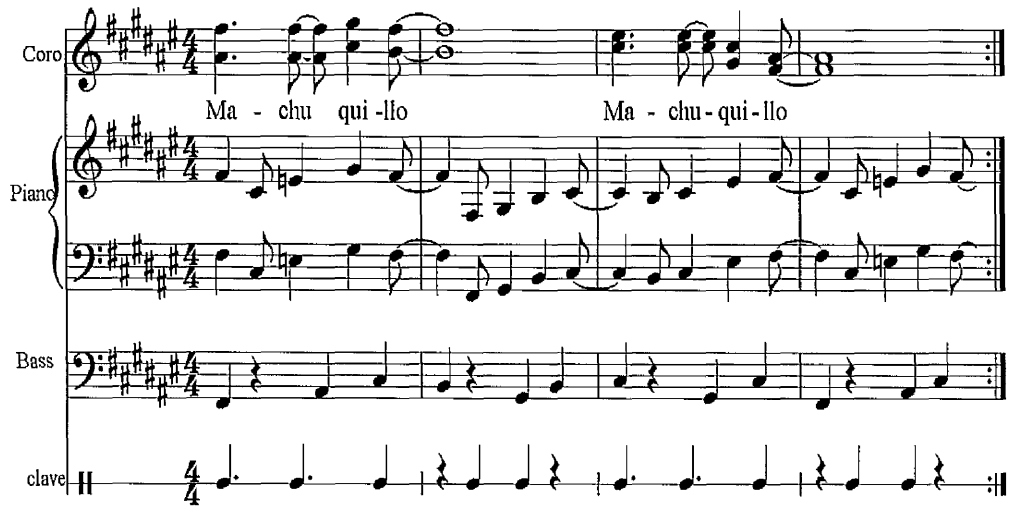
The voicing of the piano *montuno* is also of interest here; a second inversion triad, with the dominant doubled in octaves would become the characteristic starting point for what Mauleón calls 'sixth degree emphasis' - the salsa practice of alternating between the fifth and sixth degree of the scale with the outer (doubled) notes (Mauleón 1993: 132). Although originally based on the second inversion tuning of the *tres*, this voicing also fits more easily under the hands than other inversions.

Ex 5.11 El Cheque (1944)

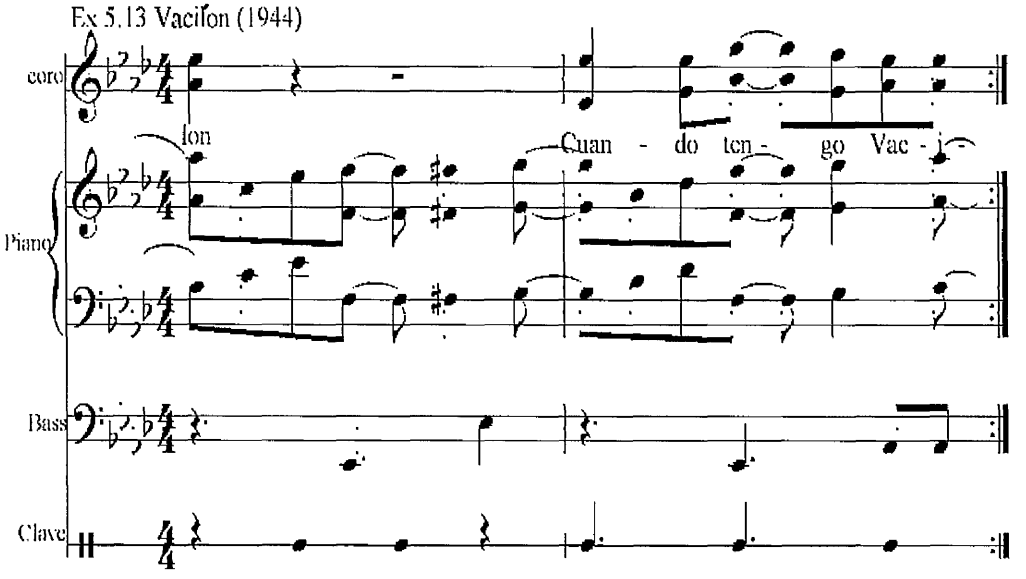


Also recorded by Sonora Matancera in 1944, the *montunos* of *Machuquillo* and *Vacilón* are considerably more syncopated but are still rhythmically identical both sides of the *clave*. In *Machuquillo*, the piano *montuno* is played consistently in the *montuno* section both before and after the piano solo (Ex 5.12, CD2:8, 1'32''), while in *Vacilón* the transcribed *montuno* (Ex 5.13, CD 2:9, 0'36'') appears only before the piano solo. In the *Machuquillo* example, the syncopation of piano and, and to a lesser extent, *coro*, is offset by the bass which sounds the first beat of each bar. According to José Reyes, Sonora were known for a more *marcha* style of accompaniment, in which the bass was not anticipated, following the more traditional bolero bass rhythm, and both *El Cheque* and *Machuquillo* conform to this (Reyes Interview 28.4.04). In *Vacilón* however, bass and piano present a staggered anticipation.

Ex 5.12 Machuquillo (1944)

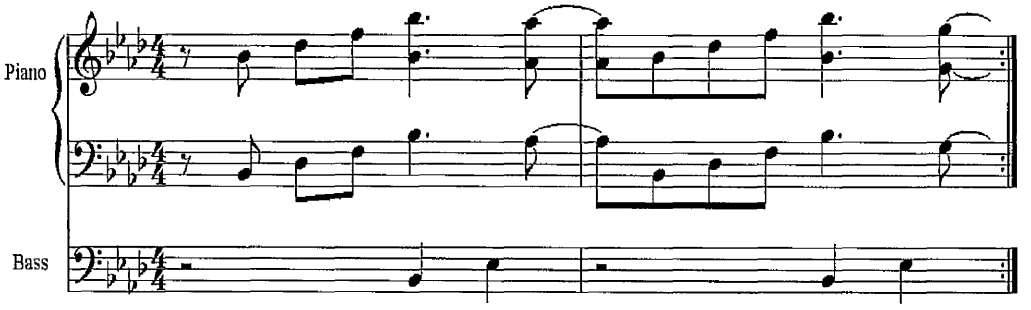


Ex 5.13 Vacilon (1944)

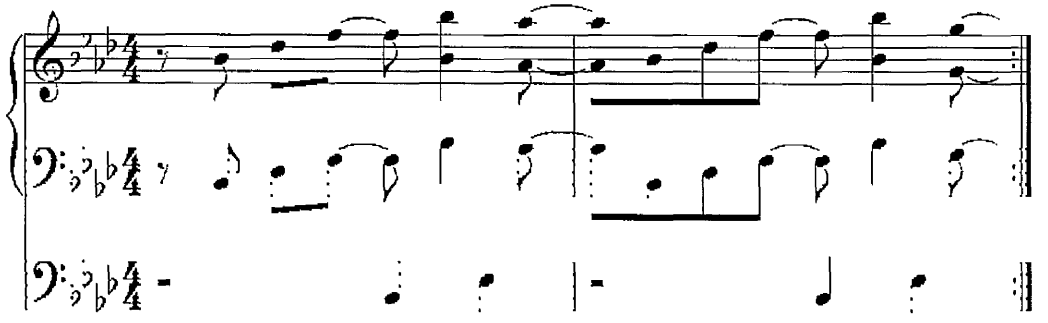


In *Cosas de la Calle*, recorded by Conjunto Kubavana in 1944 (Ex 5.14, CD2:10, 2'05', Ex 5.16 2'23'') there are two main versions of the piano *montuno*, with the second more syncopated, but again both *clave*-neutral; as with *Vacilón*, shown above, anticipation can be present without adherence to *clave*, echoing the early *clave*-neutral anticipation of *changüí*. Although the bass player is not using the classic *tresillo* anticipated rhythm, a staggered anticipation is still present between the final crotchet of the bass and the final quaver of the piano.

Ex 5.14 Cosas de la Calle (1944) Piano Montuno 1



Ex 5.15 Cosas de la Calle (2)



The stricter adherence to *clave* found in the second half of the decade, in which the direction of the *clave* influences the rhythmic shape of the *montuno* and the octave doubling, is not clearly in evidence in these recordings. Although the *tumbao* and vocals are never 'out of *clave*', they are often *clave*-neutral, or, as in *Rumba Quimbumba*, quoted above (Ex 5.8) the vocals are *clave*-neutral but the piano *montuno* reinforces the *clave*. Pianists were continuing with the type of *montuno* seen in the sextets and septets, in which the *clave* rhythm was not ignored but equally was not yet dictating other rhythmic relationships.

This type of *montuno*, in which the *clave* rhythm plays little or no part, is still considered 'más tradicional', according to Angel Laborí (Interview 13.8.02). The use of the *claves* as instruments, and the combined influence of *rumba* and the *nuevo ritmo* of *danzón*, had not yet fully permeated instrumental relationships in the *conjunto* and, in this transitional period in the development of the piano *montuno*, there remains inconsistency in the use of *clave* as a rhythmic principle in their construction.

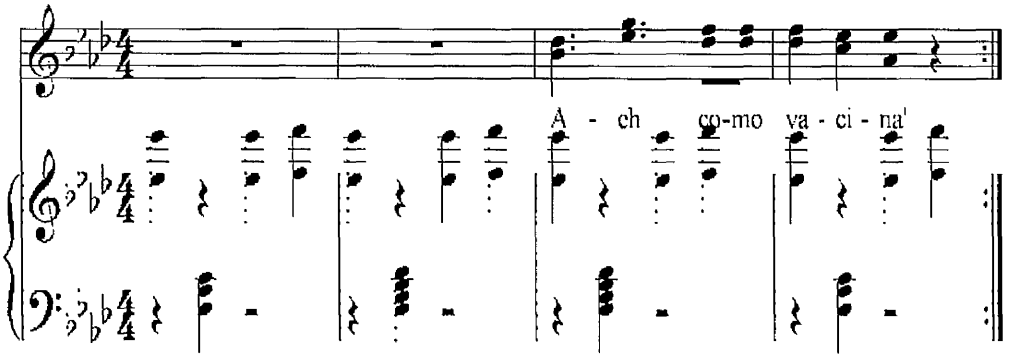
The continued development of a staggered anticipation between bass and piano owes as much to *changüí* as to the influence of *rumba* or Arcaño's *danzón*, and anticipation continued in these recordings with or without a strong *clave* presence. However, when the *clave* did influence the shape of a piano *montuno*s, in particular the sounding of the first beat of the two side of the *clave*, it meant that anticipation was confined to one side of the *clave* only (for example *Naña Rube* above).

The Development of a Counter-melodic *montuno*

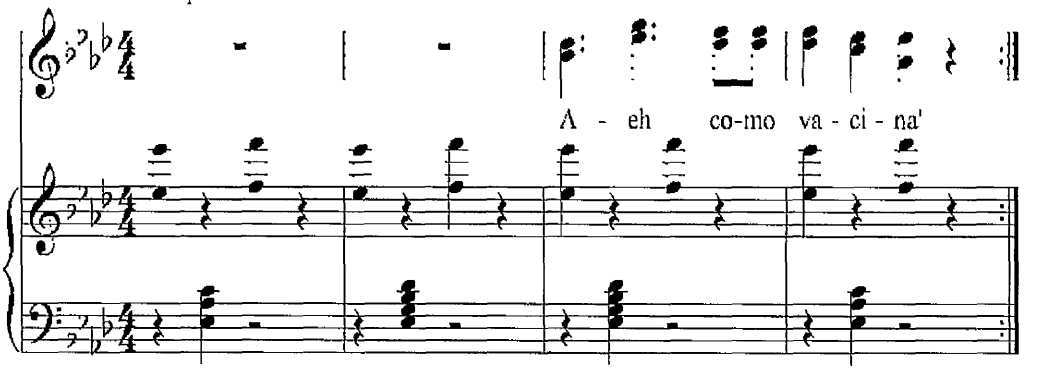
Another feature of *conjunto* piano style is the emergence, from within the argpeggiated *montuno*, of octave counter-melodies. These echo 'inherent patterns', melodies that emerge from within a fast sequence of notes, examined in Chapter 2 with reference to some African interlocking styles, but are here consciously accented with octave doubling. The *montuno*s from *El Cheque, Vacilón* and *Cosas de la Calle* (examples 5.11, 5.13 5.14 and 5.15 above) are good examples of this, with *El Cheque* also demonstrating how the second inversion voicing of the piano meant that may of these counter-melodies were formed around a dominant pedal. As they are integrated into an arpeggiated *montuno*, in the same way as the *coro* melody in more melodic *montuno*s, these counter-melodies have a rhythmic energy and drive that is fortified by their frequent off-beat accentuation and their octave reinforcement.

In these early *conjunto* recordings, with the piano still sometimes being used as a melodic instrument, this counter-melodic element was also used in isolation, often as a dominant pedal, without the surrounding arpeggiation necessarily being present. This was another way in which pianists were able to showcase the strengths of the instrument, as this more static type of countermelody would not be audible or effective on the *tres* and this type of octave playing, in the upper register of the piano, could cut thorough the dense instrumental texture. In *El Cuento del Sapo* by Sonora Matancera, the octave Eb and F, introduced within the first two bars of the right hand ostinato in the verse (quoted above in ex 5.3) becomes more pronounced in the *montuno* section as single notes in octaves, echoing the high dominant pedal in *Sandunguera* (Ex 5.4). I have transcribed two examples from *El Cuento del Sapo*: the first is the version of the ostinato heard immediately before the piano solo, and the second, immediately after it. Both emphasise the fifth and sixth notes of the scale without linking arpeggiation; like *El Cheque* (quoted above) octave doubling contributes to Mauleón's 'sixth degree emphasis' (Ex 5.16,CD2:3, 1'48'', Ex 5.17,2'27'').

Ex 5.16 El Cuento del Sapo (1944) First pedal



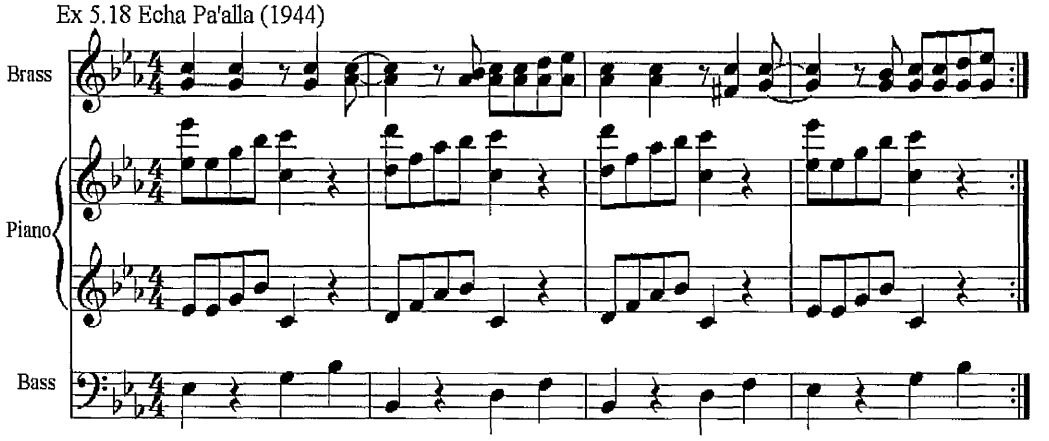
Ex 5.17 Second pedal



Whereas the *tres montuno* had relied on constant movement in the creation of both harmonic fabric and counter-melodic statement, and this is continued in the more arpeggiated style quoted above (such as *Cosas de la Calle* for example) here the countermelody becomes a separate element and, in contrast to the parallel arpeggiation of *montuno*s, the right hand has responsibility for the melody and the left hand provides the harmony.

In Sonora Matancera's *Echa pa'alla Chico*, also recorded in 1944, there is more movement in the *montuno*, with the countermelody produced by the octave notes interlocking with arpeggiation in both hands. Like *El Cheque* it is a straightforward unsyncopated arpeggiation, but the lack of movement in the second half of the bar accentuates the octave notes further. This piano *montuno* continues throughout the *montuno* section; I have transcribed the brass interlude towards the end of the piece (Ex 5.18, CD2:11, 2'24'').

Ex 5.18 Echa Pa'alla (1944)



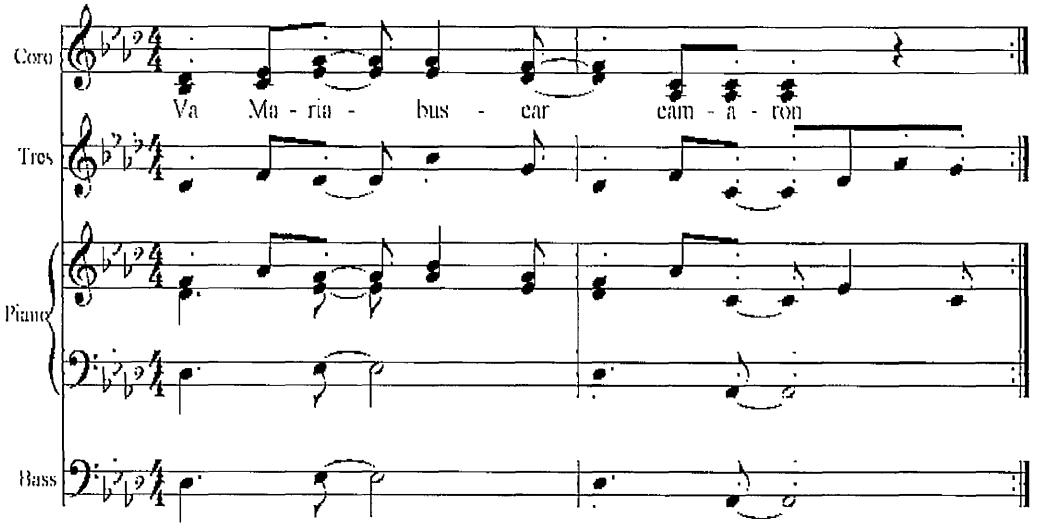
As we shall see, isolated counter-melodic lines were gradually discarded in favour of more consistent and syncopated arpeggiation from which the (counter) melody emerged. Although this may have partly been as a result of greater melodic input from the expanded trumpet section, I argue that the constant movement of an interlocking arpeggiated *montuno* was more in keeping with *son montuno*

style. The genre's history as a synthesis of arpeggiated harmony creation from *changüi,* with a greater rhythmic interlocking from *rumba*, gave the music a perpetual motion that could not be reproduced with chordal harmony or solo melodic invention.

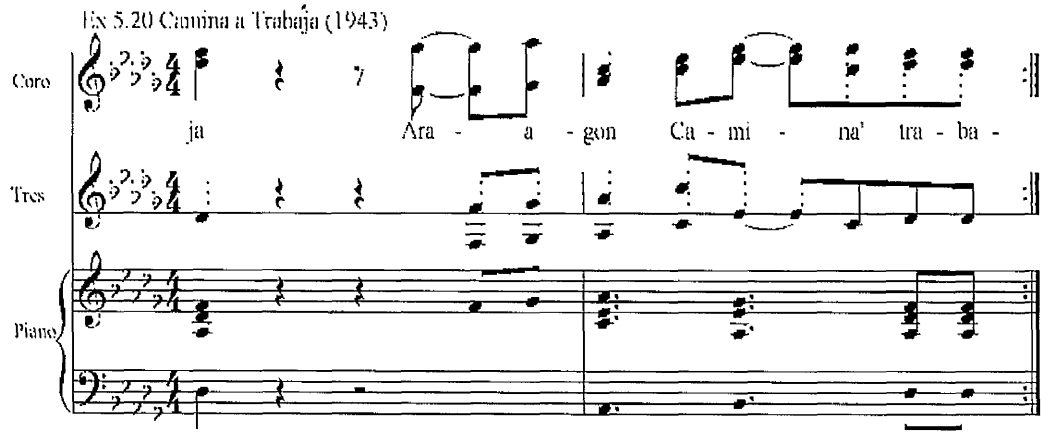
Tres and Piano

Because of the retention of the *tres* in the *conjunto* of Arsenio Rodríguez, a role had to be found for the piano which did not merely double the *tres montuno* but did not obscure it either and in these recordings this development was at an early stage. The type of complex interlocking that developed later between Arsenio and Lilí Martínez is less in evidence during this period, and *tres* and piano frequently follow a similar melodic and/or rhythmic outline. Throughout the *montuno* section of *A Buscar Camarón*, for example, recorded in 1943 with Adolfo O'Reilly (*Panacea*) on piano, the right hand doubles the *tres montuno*, while adding a harmony line in thirds, and the left hand doubles the bass. According to René Espí this type of doubling was common in early Arsenio recordings (Interview 27.4.04). Both piano and *tres* are also rhythmically synchronised with the vocals, except in the *coro* anticipation at the end of the first bar (Ex5.19, CD2:12, 0'36'').

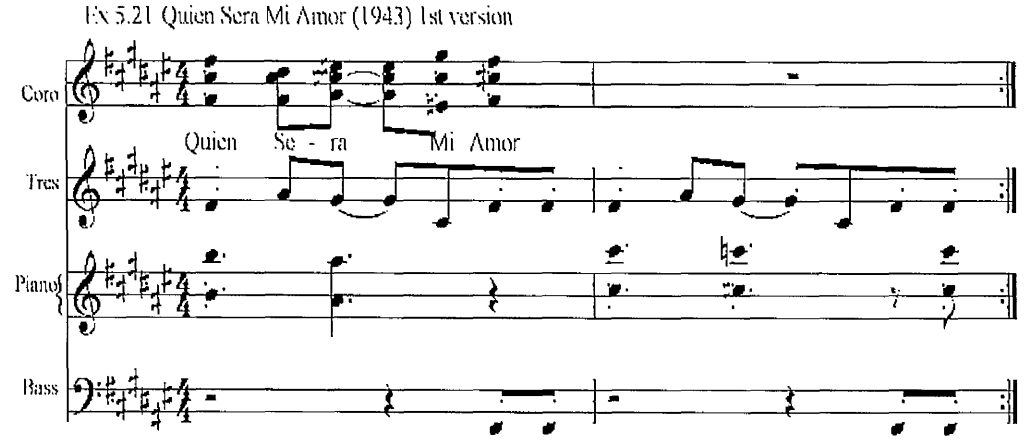
Ex 5.19 A Buscar Camarón (1943)



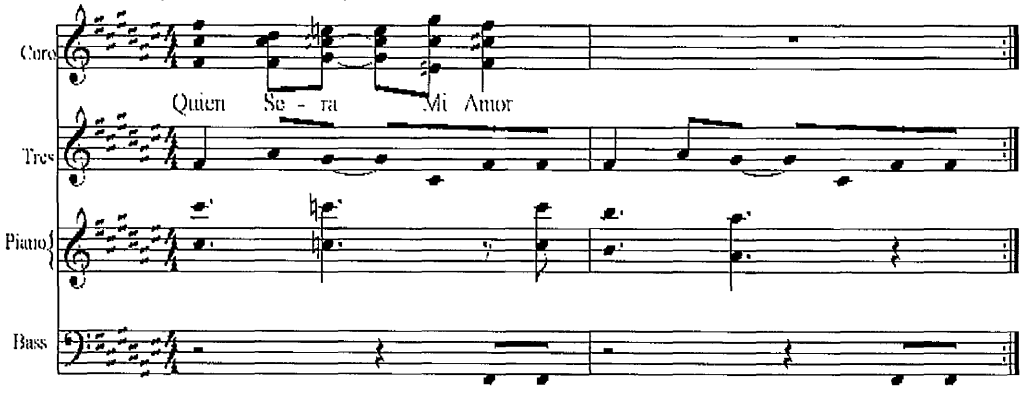
Camina a trabajá, also recorded in 1943, presents an equally chordal piano, again following the melodic and rhythmic line of the *tres* with added thirds (Ex 5.20, CD213, 0'14''). This is heard throughout the song, there being no *largo* section. While with *A Buscar Camarón*, both *tres* and piano follow just the rhythmic line of the *coro*, here the *tres*, and to a lesser extent piano, follow the melodic line more closely. García has commented how the melodic function of Arsenio's *montuno*s contrasts with the more harmonic ostinatoes of other groups (García 2003: 151) and in this respect Arsenio's style was more traditional, echoing both sextet-style *son montuno*, in which the *coro* melody was often incorporated into the *tres montuno*, and *changüí* in which the *tres*ero was often in unison with the vocal line.



Piano and *tres* did not always follow the same rhythmic outline. Counter-melodies in octaves, mentioned above in connection with Conjunto Casino and Sonora Matancera, also feature is *Panacea*'s work with Arsenio, contrasting with the melodic emphasis of the *tres montuno*. In *Quién Será Mi Amor*, a harmonically static *afro*, the *tres* has a *clave*-neutral *montuno*, rhythmically synchronised with the vocals. Two versions of a descending counter-melodic piano line are heard above this, from when the call and response changes from trumpet/*coro* to solo vocal /*coro*. *Panacea* clearly decides after a few repetitions that it works better harmonically in the second incarnation; the chromatic C natural, from then on, coincides with the first part of the phrase and with the vocals, and not in the more harmonically resolved second part (Ex 5.21, CD2:14, 1'48'', Ex 5.22, 1'59'').



Ex 5.22 Quien Sera Mi Amor (2)



Summary

Various piano techniques were experimented with in the early *conjunto* recordings. The influence of *danzón* was clear in florid, chromatic style of playing, in which the pianist had the freedom to move between different techniques. A more chordal piano style, which was a strong feature of (Cuban) jazz piano during this period (and which would be further refined in mambo during the 1950s) is also present in these recordings, particularly in the *afro* genre. This type of chordal vamping was to become less common in the later 1940s *conjunto* recordings, though in this there was a growing divide between the *sonero* style of Arsenio Rodríguez and the lighter, more arpeggiated style of the *guaracheros*. A greater level of syncopation and influence of the *clave* rhythm was becoming evident in both the chordal and the more arpeggiated styles, as was the isolation of a counter-melody by means of octave doubling. Both of these elements were reinforced by the doubling of left and right hands, more common in the *guarachero* style than in the *sones* of Arsenio Rodríguez. Imitation of the *tres* still remained at the heart of the piano *montuno* in the creation of harmony, melody and rhythmic tension within a single ostinato, and, in this, *conjunto* pianists remained distinct from their contemporaries in other genres.

5.4 The Piano Solo in *conjunto* recordings 1940-44

The roots of the *conjunto* piano solo lie in jazz and *danzón* piano solos, and in the less frequently found *tres* solo. As with Cuban jazz, piano solos in these recordings are found towards the end of the *montuno* section, with a short following section to end the song. A more developed final section, such as Arsenio's *diablo*, is not yet in evidence. The harmonic simplicity of *tumbaos*, compared with that of the chord progressions in North American jazz, meant that pianists had greater freedom within solos; they could choose to remain within the established harmonic framework or use the solo to rhythmically and harmonically disorientate the listener.

Manuel has identified a current 'Latin' piano style of improvisation in which he lists eight of the most common features which he identifies as 'standard patterns or techniques'. These comprise:

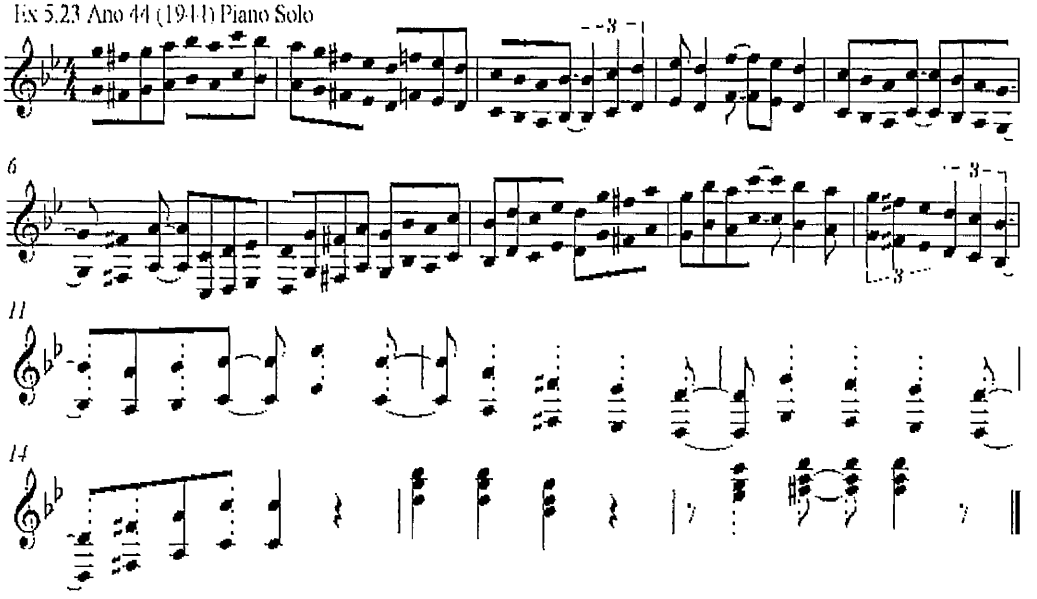
ternary phrasing; melodies played in double or even triple octaves; parallel thirds or tenths; syncopated patterns in the right hand alternating with left hand chords; *montuno*-like passages; block chords; atonal and often a-rhythmic passages; single note runs in the right hand over left had chords (Manuel 1998: 139-142).

It is interesting to note to what extent these features were already present in these early *conjunto* piano solos. Clearly many of these features relate to the nature of the instrument itself but Manuel contrasts this type of soloing - parallel motion in octaves, textual variation between different sections of the keyboard and a simpler harmonic background enabling freer chromaticism - with the right hand melody / left hand comping chords style of North American jazz solos. This suggests that the structure of the piano *montuno* - with its parallel motion, octave stress, avoidance of a 'tune and accompaniment' style and simpler chord structure - strongly influenced piano improvisation and not just in the *conjunto*. Anselmo Sacasas' solo for *Dolor Cobarde*, transcribed in the previous chapter, uses many of the same principles. Moreover, the fact that so many of Manuel's features are present at such an early stage underlines the importance of this period in the formation of a later 'Latin' piano style.

Within this early stage of development of the *conjunto* piano solo, there was considerable variation between pianists and ensembles, and two broad types of solo are in evidence. Shorter, often more diatonic solos, typical of *charanga* pianists, both before and after the innovations of Arcaño, contrast with the more harmonically and rhythmically bold jazz improvisations, quoted in the previous chapter and pioneered, on piano and *tres*, by Anselmo Sacasas and Arsenio Rodríguez respectively. However, this divide does not seem to have been related to the *guarachero* or *sonero* styles of playing or even necessarily to individual pianists. As I will show, the recordings of Conjunto Casino show examples of both types of solo, with the same pianist, *El Diablo Rojo*, and Lino Frías produced two very different solos for different ensembles, that of Arsenio Rodríguez and Sonora Matancera.

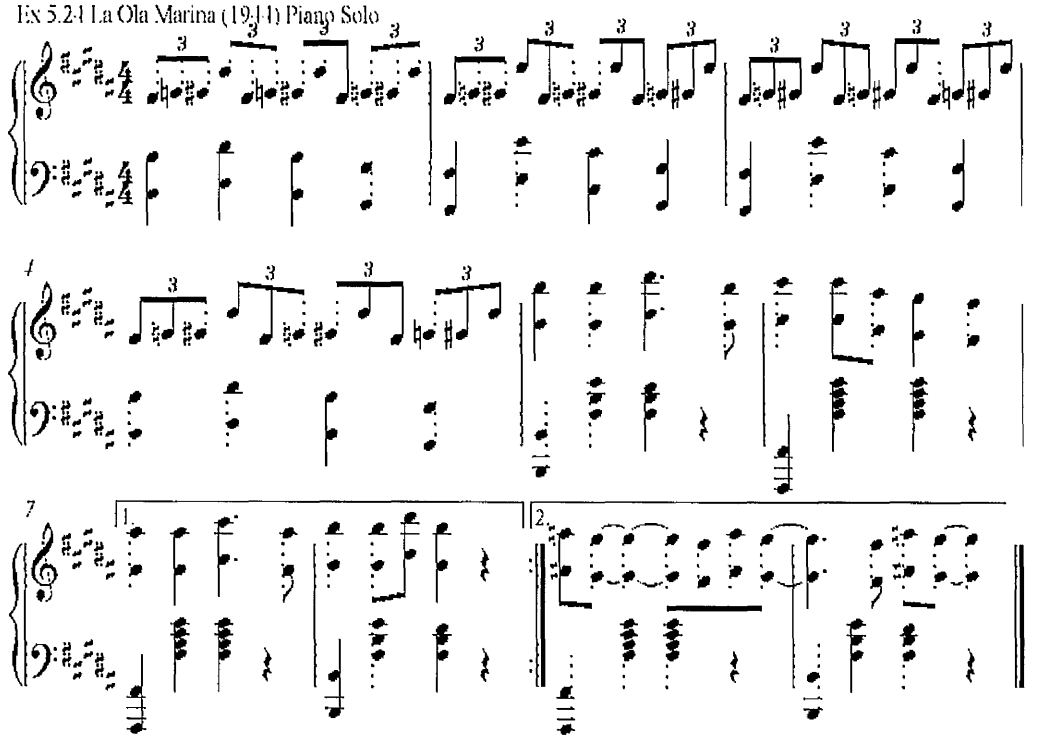
The first type of piano solo is well represented in songs by Gloria Matancera, Sonora Matancera and Conjunto Casino and showcases speed, fluidity and an almost classical construction, within a clear tonic/dominant harmonic scaffolding. The piano solo in *Año 44*, recorded in 1944 by Gloria Matancera with Alejandro Sosa on piano, moves from diatonic arpeggiation through a more syncopated avoidance of the first beat of the bar to a return to the *coro* melody. I have transcribed both hands on one stave (Ex 5.23, CD2:15, 2'14'').

Ex 5.23 Ano 44 (1944) Piano Solo



Lino Frías' solo for Sononra Matancera in *La Ola Marina*, also recorded in 1944, has an even clearer construction with chromatic triplets alternating with the main melody and an almost identical repeat (Ex 5.24, CD1:18, 2'14''). Although Frías constructs an alternative subdivision of the beat within the triplets section, using D and Eb as pedal notes, this does not serve to disorientate the listener as the pulse is clearly stated in the left had octaves. The flattened seventh in the second time bar is the only chromatic harmonic reference in a strictly tonic/dominant structure.

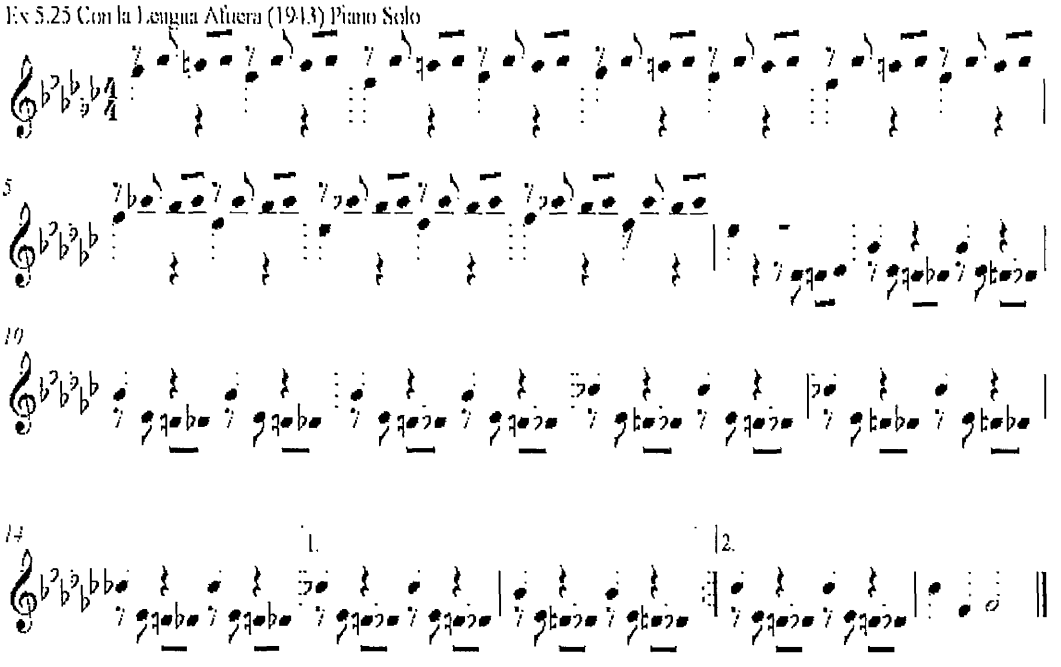
Ex 5.24 La Ola Marina (1944) Piano Solo



The solo in Conjunto Casino's *Con la Lengua Afuera* recorded in 1943, contrasts strongly with that in *A Mi Que*, recorded one year earlier and this might suggest that two different pianists were involved, but as I mentioned above, *El Diablo Rojo* was pianist on both. The examples of *El Diablo* and of Lino Frías, in his work with Sonora Matancera and Arsenio Rodríguez, reveals the versatility that was expected of *conjunto* pianists, whether moving between ensembles or providing variety within the same group.

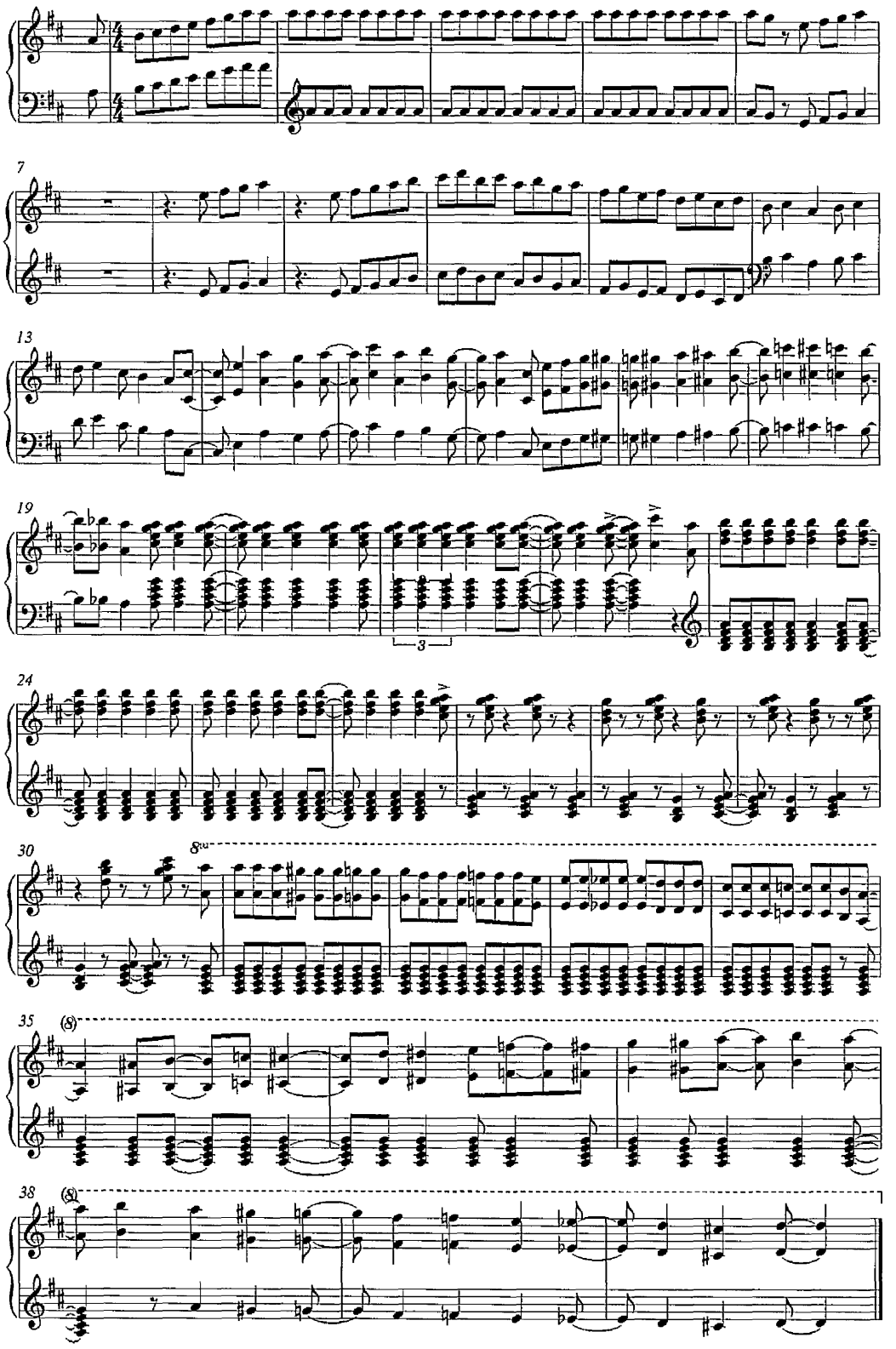
Con la Lengua Afuera's solo is another short, symmetrical improvisation, similar in construction to that in La Ola Marina (Ex 5.25, CD 2:16, 2'00''). *El Diablo* contrasts upper and lower registers of the instrument in two distinct counter melodies (Gb, F,Eb,F in the first phrase and a Bb, Cb alternation in the second) picked out within a chromatic ostinato. As with the two above examples, there is a tonic/dominant harmony throughout. I have transcribed this in one stave but the accentuation on these picked out melodies suggests that they are played with the left hand.

Ex 5.25 Con la Lengua Afuera (1943) Piano Solo



Conjunto Casino's *A Mi Que* (Ex 5.24, 2:17, 2'13'') was recorded in 1942 with just one microphone, which was moved closer to the piano for the solo section, and with the solo provided by *El Diablo Rojo* (René Espí interview: 27.4.04). It presents a very different style of piano solo, far closer to the extended improvisations of Anselmo Sacasas, and contains many of the same musical traits, packed into a very short time frame.

Ex 5.26 A Mi Que (1942) Piano Solo

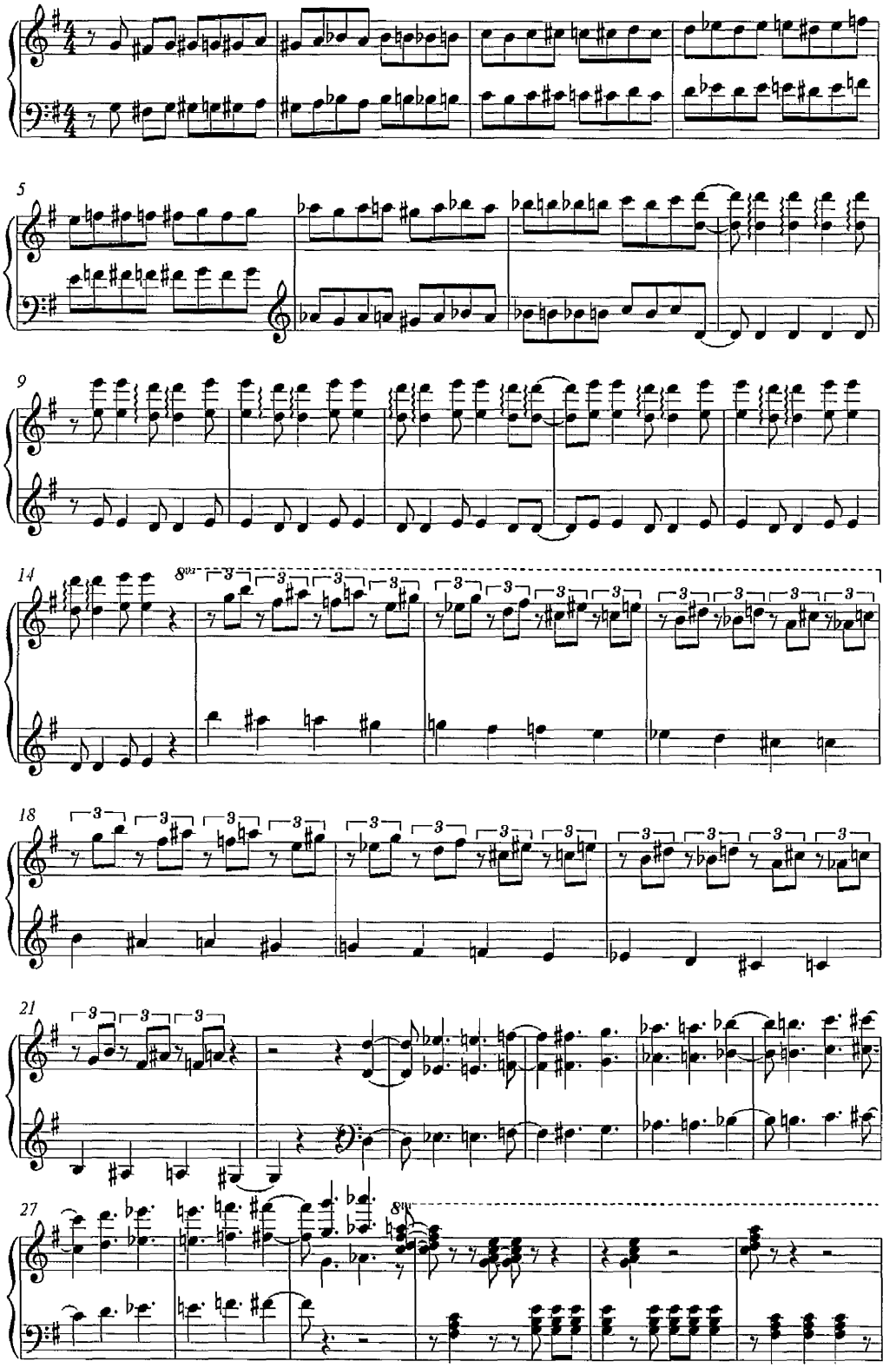


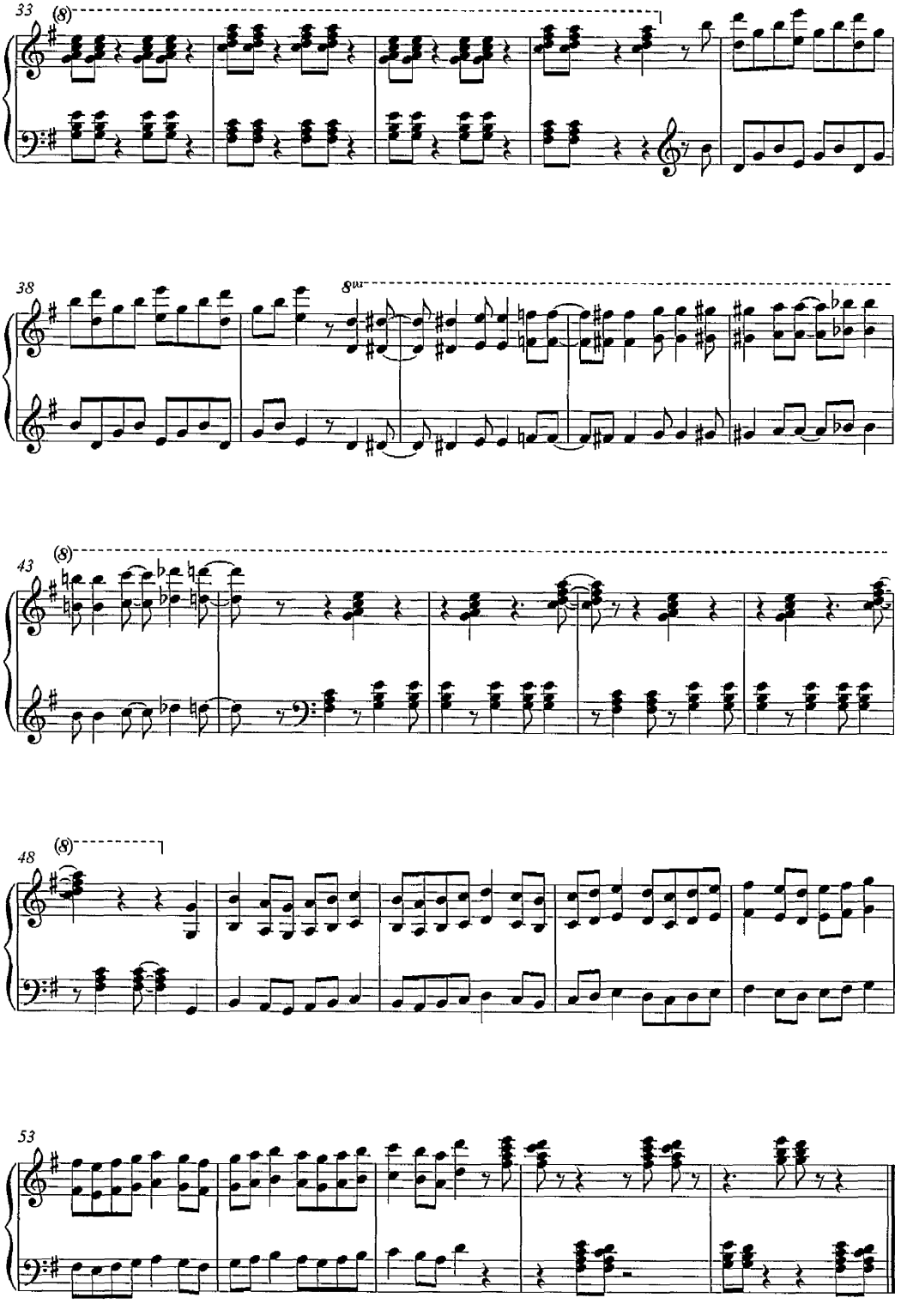
As with Anselmo Sacasas' solo in *Dolor Cobarde*, it is constructed over an extended dominant seventh and moves through various different playing techniques in a dramatic build-up of tension. Like Sacasas, *El Diablo* uses extended syncopation (bars 13-19) combined with alternative subdivision of beats (30-33) to disorientate the listener rhythmically. Constant chromatic movement is allied to dominant seventh chords to maintain the harmonic centre in bars 30-36 but even this support is abandoned in the final few bars with a syncopated descending chromatic scale that successfully conceals both pulse and harmonic centre. In Manuels' terms, *A Mi Que* includes two of his 'Latin' piano features - octave melodies (bars 8-18) and block chords (19-26).

El Pirulero no Vuelve Más (Ex 5.27, CD2:18, 1'57'') recorded by Arsenio Rodriguez in 1940, features a piano solo by Lino Frías that showcases a very different style to the balanced construction of *La Ola Marina*, recorded four years later. Like *El Diablo* in his solo for *A Mi Que*, Frías uses many of the same musical techniques as Anselmo Sacasas in his 1937 solo for *Dolor Cobarde*. In a similar manner, Frías constructs an extended solo over a dominant seventh chord, though in this instance there are moments of harmonic resolution within the solo. From the start, the listener is disorientated in pulse and harmony by alternative subdivisions of the beats (bars 1-14) and constantly moving chromatic scales (15-29). Resolving to the tonic in bar 37, Frías appears to be concluding the solo with a *montuno* figure, but this is soon abandoned with a return to syncopated chromatic ascent. The second harmonic resolution in bar 49 coincides with another rhythmically unsettling subdivision before the entry of the other band members in bar 56.

El Pirulero has a larger number of Manuel's features than *A Mi Que*: ternary phrasing (bars 6-7, 37-39) and triplets (15-22); octave melodies (1-14, 39-43); alternating right and left hand in syncopated patterns, (though playing chords with both hands rather than the alternation of right hand octaves with a chordal left hand as described by Manuel) (30-36, 44-48). In an interesting musical reference to the *tres*, Frías uses staggered and simultaneous octave doubling (bars 8-14) to imitate the unison and octave doubling of different *tres* notes. To imitate it literally would reduce the volume and weaken certain notes (which are all doubled, whether in unison or octaves, on the *tres* and thus at the same volume); this method creates the impression of the octave doubling by imitating the slight delay between the notes due to the distance between strings.

Ex 5.27 El Pirulero No Vuelve Mas (1940) Piano Solo

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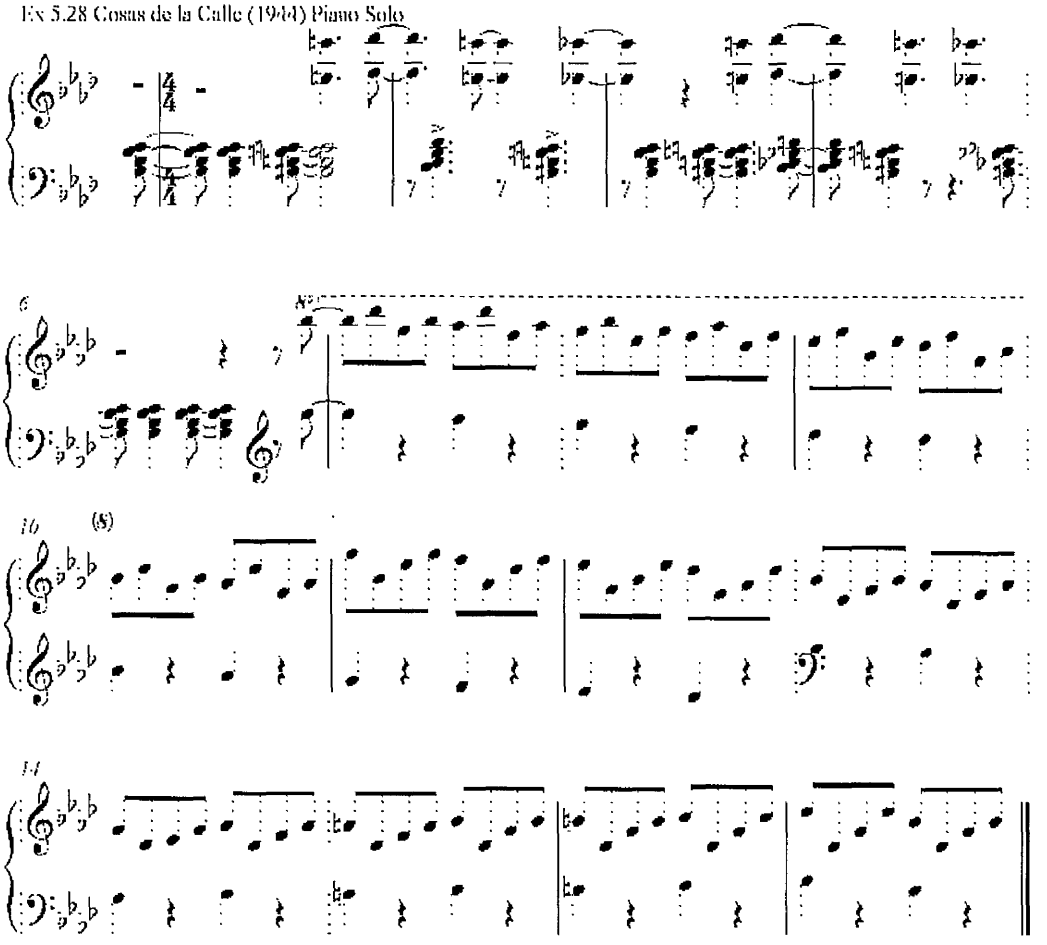
53

These two styles of piano soloing - symmetrical diatonic classicism and chromatic extended streams of consciousness - were not mutually exclusive, though in practice were rarely combined. One exception is Conjunto Kubavana's *Cosas de la Calle*, with a piano solo by Eulogio Castelero (Ex 5.26, CD2:10 2'42'). Like *A Mi Que*, it is constructed over an extended dominant seventh but after a rhythmically and harmonically unsettling first five bars, Castelero makes a sudden transition to a more diatonic arpeggiated figure with a descending melodic scale reinforced with the left hand.

Ex 5.28 Cosas de la Calle (1944) Piano Solo



Conclusion

The piano was well established in both *danzón* and jazz by the time it became a fixture in the *conjunto*, and its earlier presence in those genres was a constant reminder to *soneros* of the instrument's musical possibilities, as well as its higher social standing. Mutual influence between styles and ensembles was inevitable and the musical attractions of the instrument were clear. However, although strongly influenced by contemporary types of ensemble and their instrumentation, the *conjunto* always remained distinct, as much for its history and 'national' heritage as for its different

line-up. The legacy of the *tres* remained clear in the consistent use of accentuated arpeggiation in the place of block harmony.

What the piano shared in all genres was a fluidity of role and the freedom to experiment. The 1928 Sexteto Gloria Cubana recordings, examined in Chapter 3, reveal an early attempt to combine a melodic, often chromatic role, reminiscent of *danzón* with a more arpeggiated imitation of the *tres*, and there was a constant movement between the two. The early 1940s recordings show an even greater movement between melodic, arpeggiated and (from jazz) chordal vamp, but the loss of the *tres* in the majority of ensembles, combined with the influence of the *nuevo ritmo* of the *charanga* orchestra, gave an impetus to the development of a self-consciously accented and more *clave*-aware version of the *montuno*.

Stylistic differences between *sonero* and *guarachero conjuntos* were less marked in the first half of the 1940s. The greater use of chordal vamping by Conjunto Casino, for example, was as much to do with repertoire - unlike Sonora Matancera they recorded a large number of *afros* during this period - as a stylistic choice. However the piano (and *tres*) *montunos* of Arsenio Rodríguez show a greater tendency to follow the outline of the melody while the *guaracheros* tend towards a more harmonic approach and the regular use of counter-melody, showing the influence of *charanga* pianists. Jazz-influenced solos of a dramatic build-up over a dominant seventh and the more classically constructed tonic/dominant improvisations were present in both types of ensemble.

Although the piano was treated in many instances as a replacement for the *tres*, and in some cases for the guitar, *conjunto* pianists created a new role. With the piano in some cases being played alongside both *tres* and guitar and in other cases becoming the sole harmonic provider in the rhythm section, there was no abrupt take-over but rather a gradual reorganisation of musical roles. The influence of jazz bands was key to much of the development of this new piano style, but the versatility of the instrument and its greater musical possibilities meant that pianists could adapt to the specific demands of the *conjunto*. Likewise, although *conjunto* pianists were influenced by the syncopated rhythmic vamps of the post-*nuevo ritmo danzón*, their greater use of arpeggiation and counter-melody meant that they maintained a stylistic difference.

What emerges strongly from the examination of early *conjunto* recordings is the durability of the *tres*-influenced style of piano *montuno*. Although *conjunto* pianists borrowed other techniques - such as octave melodic statement or chordal vamps - from *danzón* and jazz, it was not these elements, which would gradually diminish in importance, but the cyclical arpeggiated *tres* ostinato that formed the basis for the new style of piano playing. Thus, melodic, arpeggiated interlocking as a means of harmony creation, examined with reference to plucked string instruments in Chapter 2, had survived another instrumental substitution to become part of Cuban piano technique. In blending influences from *danzón* and jazz with the fluid *tres montuno* style, *conjunto* pianists in the 1940s were creating a specific *conjunto* style of playing and setting the foundations for future keyboard developments. The piano *montuno* that emerged in the second half of the 1940s showed less reliance on other genres and consolidated the experimentation of the first half of the decade.

Chapter 6 *Guaracheros* and *Soneros*

During the period 1945-51 two distinct types of *conjunto* emerged in Cuba, reflecting the social and racial divisions between different types of audience. This development parallels the social divisions between *conjuntos* and other types of ensemble found in the earlier part of the decade, but also represents further maturation and experimentation within the genre of *son montuno* itself. This chapter examines how these stylistic differences between *conjuntos* affected the role of the piano, and traces the refinement of distinct strands of *conjunto* piano style within different types of ensemble. Although there was still considerable variation between groups, pianists and approaches, a greater division between so-called *guarachero* and *sonero* styles of *son montuno* led to distinct types of piano *montuno*. The use of interlocking remained, however, both within the arpeggiated *montuno* itself and in conjunction with other members of the ensemble. In spite of the continued presence of the *tres* in *sonero* groups, imitation of its plucked, melodic approach to harmony creation informed both styles.

Groups were categorised as either playing in a *guarachero* or *sonero* style, referring to their repertoire of *guaracha* or *son montuno*, but also using the racial terminology of 'black' (*sonero*) or 'white' (*guarachero*). The racial categorisation here is more subtle than the European/African paradigm that I have already mentioned in earlier chapters, but it reflects the same tendency to categorise musical genres and stylistic features racially. It refers neither to the geographical origins of the musical genre nor to the type of instruments involved (as *conjuntos* broadly shared the same instrumentation and genre) but to perceived differences in musical style, interpretation and approach. Although using the language of race, the meanings of black and white in this context were socially determined, referring to a host of specific musical features and not necessarily to the race of musicians themselves. Indeed it was possible for groups of mixed race musicians (Sonora Matancera, Gloria Matancera or Kubavana) to be perceived as a white *conjunto*.

Nevertheless, this racial discourse broadly reflected the social divisions between types of ensemble, and became a marker of musical identity as stylistic differences between *conjuntos* became more pronounced. As Moore notes in his study of *son montuno* in the 1920s and 30s, popular music can be a way of 'defining individual identity' and people's constructed meanings reflect 'an opposition between conformity to dominant views of themselves and an assertion of their own' (Moore 1997: 8). And García likewise maintains that racial terminology was not imposed from above but celebrated by musicians and audiences themselves, reflecting its role as a 're-appropriation of the discourses of racial difference' in Havana's social, racial and geographical landscape (García 2003: 34). Moreover, as García also demonstrates, Arsenio Rodríguez's 'blacker' sound was rooted in specific musical structures and orchestral approaches which he relates to African principles of structure, rhythm, instrumental substitution and presentation (García 2003: 26-32). This echoes Maultsby's observation that elements such as style of delivery and sound quality form the basis for an African aesthetic framework in the Americas (Maultsby 2005: 328). Thus this type of racial categorisation represented a sophisticated reading of musical style that went beyond surface features to deeper structures and modes of performance.

This contrast in performance styles was reflected in the role of the piano within different

conjuntos. In this chapter however, I argue that, in spite of clear stylistic differences between the piano *montunos* of the two types of *conjunto*, and in spite of the perception of the *sonero* style as 'blacker', the role of the instrument in both styles can be traced to the interlocking technique of the *tres*, in which harmony is created using melodic movement and accentuation in place of block chords. Likewise the shared rhythmic structures into which the *tres* was incorporated in the 1920s are continued in both styles, albeit with differences in approach. The 'Africanisation' of the piano can thus be seen in both *guarachero* and *sonero conjuntos* and, while the *guarachero* piano *montuno* more closely resembles the *son montuno* (and later salsa) piano *montuno* described in Chapter 1, both styles conform to a horizontal approach to harmony creation.

In the first part of this chapter, I describe the changed situation for musicians following the end of the war and, drawing on García (2003), outline the structural and stylistic differences between the different approaches to *son montuno* represented by the two types of *conjunto*. I then examine the *guarachero* and *sonero* piano styles in more detail, using extensive transcription of examples. The *guarachero montuno* had a clearer influence on later *son montuno* and salsa styles, and its most characteristic elements - octave accentuation, constant arpeggiation, second inversion voicing and consistent counter-melody - are all present in these examples.

For the *sonero* section, given the difficulties of transcribing the *sonero* piano *montunos*, with both musical and extra-musical factors hampering transcription, I use a multi-faceted approach to the examination of the piano style. I augment my own transcriptions of Arsenio Rodríguez in two ways. Firstly I reproduce some of the small number of piano transcriptions from David García's detailed work on Arsenio Rodríguez, in order to trace developments in the piano *montuno*. Secondly I use my own transcriptions from contemporary groups who deliberately follow the *sonero* style[59]. As with the section on *changüi* in chapter 2, I am here examining contemporary recreations of older styles as a way of clarifying earlier musical structures, and any comparison has to be viewed in the light of subsequent musical developments. In this case, the isolation of the piano and *tres* parts in my recordings (and with the pianists and *treseros* involved consciously avoiding variation), has enabled the distillation of individual piano and *tres montunos* in a way that more closely resembles Arom's idea of a 'model' and enables the close examination of the interplay between the two instruments. I then compare these with what is audible in the originals in order to gain a more accurate picture of both Arsenio's approach and later variations. Finally, I transcribe examples from the other *sonero* group of the period, Los Astros, to enable a further comparison in approaches to the piano *montuno*.

6.1 Cuban Musical Life 1945-51

The end of the Second World War in 1945 had mixed consequences for Cuba. Politically little had changed: Grau San Martín's 1944 Auténtico government was riddled with corruption and did little to solve Cuba's many economic problems. Neglecting basic infrastructure within the country, the

[59] It is outside the scope of this thesis to examine the many re-creations of the *conjunto* period that have emerged with the growing popularity of Cuban music in the last 20 years, such as the groups Sierra Maestra and Cubanismo and the trumpeter Manuel 'Guajiro' Mirabal. I have chosen therefore to concentrate on two groups that specifically present themselves as accurately reproducing Arsenio's style.

government diverted funds from much-needed investment while continuing to silence political opposition. In spite of the United States extending their wartime policy of buying the entire sugar harvest, by the time Carlos Prío won the 1948 election, the country was insolvent (Sublette 2004: 557; Thomas 1971: 738, 765). More positively, tourism had returned to the country on a grand scale from 1945, with reconstruction preventing much European travel and Latin American wartime support of the Allies being rewarded by North American travellers.

As with the first part of the decade, there was a huge gap, in economic and social terms, between the countryside and the larger towns, with Havana in particular attracting a sophisticated, as well as mafia-connected, crowd. The Sans Souci and Montmartre nightclubs, closed during the war years, reopened, providing more opportunities for musicians (Sublette 2004: 512). Radio continued to be a source of income for musicians, though the closing of the Communist-supporting Mil Diez station by Prío during his 1948 election campaign removed a major employer of musical talent (Sublette 2004: 556).

Radio was joined in 1950 by television and many groups became household names via the new medium. Conjunto Casino, for example, became an established act on *El Show del Mediodía* on CMQ (Martínez Rodríguez 1998: 121). To a greater extent than radio, television replicated the type of racial discrimination practiced by the cabarets and Conjunto Casino were, with the exception of Patato Valdes on congas, a white group. The Cuban and Mexican film industries were also using individual musicians and musical groups on a much more regular basis, and from the late 40s onwards many Cubans had film careers. Although individual singers and Cuban jazz bands were more successful in this regard than *conjuntos*, both Sonora Matancera and Jovenes del Cayo appeared in various titles (Leymarie 2002: 110, Valaverde 1997:13; Crespo 2003: 228).

There were thus many more opportunities for musicians in the second half of the 1940s, in both live and recorded performance, and this was reflected in the growth in *conjunto* numbers. Many *conjuntos* were formed in the second half of the decade: Colonial (1946) Los Astros (1948) Modelo (1948) Cubanacán (1948). Many others, already in existence, made the bulk of their recordings during this period: Niagara, Jovenes del Cayo, Gloria Matancera, Kubavana and of course, Casino, Sonora Matancera and Arsenio Rodríguez[60]. There is therefore a much wider selection of groups to examine with reference to the piano and a wider interpretation of stylistic difference between ensembles. As I mentioned above, groups were categorised racially during this period. *Conjuntos* such as Kubavana, Casino, Colonial, Niagra and Jovenes del Cayo were considered white while Arsenio Rodríguez y su Conjunto and Los Astros were described as black (García 2003;232, Ledón Sanchez 2003: 102, José Reyes interview 28.4.04, René Espi interview 27.4.04).

Although there was a certain amount of elasticity in this type of terminology, it did frequently reflect the ethnicity of the musicians themselves and therefore had a direct bearing on the types of engagements they could expect.[61] While dance academies continued to provide a regular income during the week for *conjuntos* in general, white bands could supplement this with concerts at upper-class white

[60] This expansion in *conjunto* numbers would continue into the 1950s with Conjunto Saratoga (1952), Conjunto Rumbavana (1957), Las Estrellas de Chocolate (1957), Conjunto Artemiseno (1953) and Conjunto Bolero (1957) (Orovio 2004: 198,192; Leymarie 2002: 127)

[61] For a more detailed discussion, see García 2003: pp52-96

social clubs and cabarets at the weekend, while black groups were more often playing at lower-paying black venues in Marianao, a suburb of Havana. (García 2003; 86) White groups were more likely to have regular radio work, though the station Mil Diez (between 1943 and 1948) had opened the way for a greater racial mix. They were also more likely to have international careers and film appearances. However, Sonora's success both in film and in white cabaret clubs demonstrates that these restrictions were never insurmountable and that playing in a musical style that appealed more to a white audience could be the most important factor (Garcia 2003: 93-95; Mendez/Pérez 1992: 77).

Not all groups fitted easily into the categories of *guarachero* or *sonero*, and there is disagreement amongst both academics and musicians about several *conjuntos*. Although both Jovenes del Cayo and Colonial have been categorised by academics as *guarachero* (by García and José Reyes respectively) Humberto Cané, former *tresero* with Sonora Matancera, maintained in a 1998 interview that Sonora's rhythm 'didn't appeal to blacks who preferred the sound of Conjunto Colonial, Conjunto Cauto, Los Jovenes del Cayo etc' ie the blacker groups (García 2003:231-232; Reyes interview 28.4.04; Tamargo 1998: 25).

The groups from Matanzas - Sonora Matancera and Gloria Matancera - have provoked the most disagreement. José Reyes, Ledón Sanchez and René Espí consider Sonora to be a third style, combining elements of both, while García categorises them with the *guarachero* style. Gloria Matancera is considered by Espí to be part of the blacker *sonero* sound, while García considers them *guaracheros* and Ledón Sanchez considers them a third style (Espí interview 27.4.04; Ledón Sanchez 2003: 103-104 García 2003: 231-232). For the purpose of this thesis, I categorise both groups within the *guarachero* sound, as their piano *montunos* conform more to this style, but note, as with all groups, when they more clearly follow the *sonero* stylistic outline.

It was from a sophisticated reading of musical elements that audiences identified, and still can identify, a white or black group. *Tresero* Pancho Amat, for example, commenting in the 1992, maintained that

> If you listened to Sonora Matancera, who were from the same epoch (as Arsenio Rodríguez) and which was made up of black players, you were listening to a white *conjunto*'[62] (Quoted in Mendez/Pérez 1992: 89)

Rolando Baró, pianist with Conjunto Casino from 1953, includes Sonora in the white camp and describes the difference between different styles of *conjunto* thus:

> There were two types of *conjunto*. They were called black *conjuntos* and Casino was a white *conjunto*. It's more or less *son* but less strong, lighter; it's the same conception but not as strong as Arsenio's *conjunto*...Arsenio's type of *conjunto* played slower and Casino and Sonora Matancera's type faster, more animated.[63] (Interview 21.4.04)

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[62] Tu escuchabas a la Sonora Matancera, que era de la misma época y que estaba integrada por negros, y estabas escuchando un *conjunto* de blancos

[63] Habían dos tipos de *conjunto*. Se llamaban *conjuntos* de negros y Casino era *conjunto* de blancos... Es más o menos un *son* pero menos fuerte, más ligero, es la misma concepción pero no tan fuerte como el de Arsenio Rodríguez... el *conjunto* del tipo de Arsenio Rodríguez tocaba mas lento y el tipo como Casino y Sonora Matancera más rapido, los números movidos.

However, according to Carmen Delia Dipini, who sang with both Conjunto Casino and Sonora Matancera, there were stylistic differences between Sonora and white groups:

> I recorded with Sonora and played in public with Conjunto Casino. It's a beautiful thing. I said 'I'm singing with a *conjunto* of whites and recording with a *conjunto* of blacks.' They had different styles but my taste was with Sonora[64] (quoted in Valaverde 1997: 111)

Taking these divisions into account, in the rest of the chapter I present considerably more examples from *guaracheros* than *soneros*. The larger number of *guarachero* groups stems from the better work opportunities presented by playing in this style but also from the fact that Arsenio's *sonero* style was yet to be the strong influence it later became. Many of those who followed Arsenio's *sonero* style were often deliberately continuing with his work, as is the case with Las Estrellas de Chappottín, or comprised musicians who had played with Arsenio in the past, as with Las Estrellas de Chocolate or Conjunto Modelo. None of these groups were formed until after Arsenio's departure for the United States in 1951.

Repertoire and Stylistic Differences between *Guaracheros* and *Soneros*

The repertoire of *conjuntos* comprised four main musical genres: bolero, *son montuno*, *guaracha* and *guaguancó*. While all groups performed boleros, black groups such as that of Arsenio Rodríguez concentrated on *son montuno* and *gugaguancó*, and white groups, such as Conjunto Casino, played mainly *guaracha*. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, I am using the term *son montuno* in this chapter to refer to the style performed by Arsenio Rodríguez and other black groups, but with the understanding that, structurally, *guaracha*, *guaguancó* and *son montuno* are part of the same overall *son montuno* genre. The many hybrid forms that had already emerged, such as bolero-*son*, *afro-son*, *gaujiro-son*, and *son-pregón*, also followed a similar structural format within the *montuno* section, and any discussion of *conjunto* style, while taking these differences into account, can also therefore include all these variations as part of the overall *son montuno* genre.

Guaracha had a much more sectional structure than the *son montuno* played by *soneros*, with instrumental interludes and repeated verses within both *largo* and *montuno* sections. Some *guarachas* bypassed the *largo* altogether by starting with a *montuno*, only to return to a verse section in the middle (such as in Casino's *Don Felipe*, Tumbao 030). Equally, the verse/chorus structure sometimes resulted in no *montuno* section, as with Conjunto Casino's *Oye Aquí Está*, (Tumbao 030) Conjunto Colonial's *En Cutara* (Victor 23-5426-2) or *Esa sí es el Cheque* (Coda 5085-2) by Jovenes de la Calle. Brass interludes, usually based on either the introduction or verse melody, had been frequent in the *largo* section of *guarachas* in the early 1940s and the second half of the decade saw these also become a feature of the *montuno* section where they were often situated to introduce or frame the piano solo. Examples 6.1 and 6.2 show the various different *largo* and *montuno* section outlines, with examples of each in the final column.

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[64] Grabé con la Sonora y tocaba en público con el Conjunto Casino. Es la cosa más hermosa, decía yo: 'Estoy cantando en el *conjunto* de los blancos y grabo con el *conjunto* de los negros'. Eran diferentes estilos pero mi sabor estaba con la Sonora.

Example 6.1 *Guarachero Largo* section structures:

Brass Introduction	**Verse**	**Chorus**		*Mariana* (Colonial)
Brass Introduction	**Verse**	**Middle Eight**	**Verse**	*Rumba Moderna* (Kubavana)
Brass Introduction	**Verse**	**Repeat of intro**	**Verse**	*Bulawaya* (Jovenes del Cayo)
Brass Introduction	**Verse**	**Short *Montuno***	**Verse**	*Cepillando* (Colonial)
Brass Introduction	**Verse (vocal)**	**Verse (brass)**	**Verse (vocal)**	*Fuera la Careta* (Colonial)

Example 6.2 *Guarachero Montuno* Section structures:

Call and Response inc: *coro*/trumpet, *coro*/brass, *coro*/vocal		**Instrumental solo**		**Call and Response**	**Repeat of Brass Intro**	*Las Cinco novias* (Kubavana)
Call and Response	**New brass section**	**Solo**	**Original Brass Introduction**	**Call and Response**		*Rumba en el patio* (Kubavana)
Call and Response	**New Brass Section**	**Solo**	**Repeat of new brass section**	**Call and Response**		*Asi es la Humanidad* (Jovenes del Cayo)
Call and Response		**Solo**		**Call and Response**		*Como pica* (Gloria Matancera)

Given the now written nature of trumpet parts, there was a tendency, at least in some groups, to also arrange the call and response element of the *montuno* section, previously improvised by a solo trumpet. This gave the piano solo a greater importance as the only instrumental improvisation in a song. In sixteen Jovenes del Cayo recordings, for example, made between 1947 and 1951, none have a solo improvising trumpet, instead relying on written brass responses[65]. Conjunto Casino alternated solo improvised trumpet in some *son*gs (*Quinto me Llama,* Tumbao 030) with a more frequent use of written brass responses (*Ay Nicolás,* Tumbao 030, *Cuanto Se Debe, El Sordo,* Musica Latina 55005). Likewise Kubanvana recorded songs both with written brass reponses (*Rumba en el Patio, Cerro Brinco, Las Cinco Novias, Alabaniosa,* Tumbao 034) and solo improved solo trumpet *(Corta el*

[65] (Coda)*Bachata Oriental, 5085-1 Esa sí es el Cheque* 5085-2 *Doña Olga* 5063-1, *Nada lo que Sea* 5091-2 , *Rio la Yagua* 5091-1, *El Dedo Gordo* 50632, (Seeco) *Alabanza a Changó* 7142-1, *Así es la Humanidad* 7108-2, *Bulawaya* 7122-2, *Deja la Cosa Como Está* 7124-2, *El Peinado de Maria* 7098-1 *Le Dijó el Gato al Ratón* 7084-1, *Pedro* 7098-2, *Piedra Cu Tu Maren* 7142-2, *Ritmo Alegre* 7140-1, *Tu esta Emarañao* 7140-2

Bonche, Tumbao 030, *Quitate el Zapato* Victor 23-0382-2, *Se Acabó Victor* 23-0359-2)

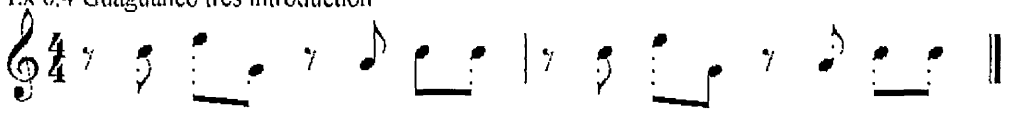
Son montuno, by contrast, was structured as a gradual build of energy rather than a series of interludes. A *largo* section was no longer necessarily included and the *montuno* section would comprise call and response between trumpet and *coro* and voice and *coro,* an instrumental solo, a short instrumental break and the *diablo* section (see below). The trumpet/*coro* call and response was as a general rule more improvisatory but there are examples such as Arsenio's *Dundunbanza* (Tumbao 043) with written brass responses.

Example 6.3 *Sonero Montuno* Section structure:

Call and Response (*coro*/trpt, *coro*/ voice)	**Instrumental solo**	**Break**	***Diablo* section**

The other sub-genre played by *soneros, guaguancó,* as its name suggests, made musical and lyrical reference to street *rumba.* Arsenio Rodríguez, in particular, wrote many *guaguancós,* often at the request of specific Havana neighbourhoods which were praised in the lyrics. Structurally there were few differences with *son montuno,* and songs followed a similar outline though were played at a slightly faster tempo (García 2003:214). Although *guaracheros* also sang about *rumba,* (eg Kubavana, *La Rumba está Buena*) the *guaguancós* sung by *soneros* included specific musical features that helped to define it as a genre. The *tres* introduction to *guaguancós* is specific and distinctive, a harmonically static introductory riff, in the major or minor, and this characteristic rhythm is used by the *tresero* throughout the *song.* (ex 6.4) Moreover, the *coro* often makes vocal reference to the *diana* section of *rumba guaguancó,* a series of vocalised syllables that functions as an introduction and calls attention to the start of the *song* (for example in *Juventud de Cayo Hueso,* Tumbao 031) (Daniel 1995: 85).

Ex 6.4 Guaguancó tres introduction



On the part of the audiences, stylistic labels based on race reflected a musical judgement that went beyond assumptions based on the racial make-up of individual groups, descriptions provided by the record company, or even structural elements within the songs. García has covered these musical differences, and in particular the musical style developed by Arsenio Rodríguez, in great detail. He identifies a distinct black musical sound based on contrasting timbres and a greater rhythmic density, and it was these musical features that made the style easily identifiable, whatever the song. A comparatively slow tempo, reminiscent of 1920s *sones,* contrasted with the faster tempos of *guaracheros,* as the more complex rhythmic structure of Arsenio's style, and the demands of the dancing audience, necessitated a slower speed (García 2003; 134-135,156-157). Moreover, in the

words of Roberto Espí, vocalist with Conjunto Casino, 'the *tres* gave it the characteristic sound of *son*, of time honoured *son*'[66] (Mendez/Pérez 1992:52).

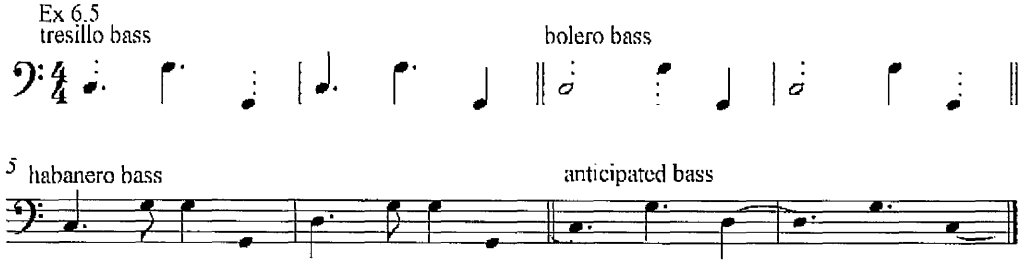
It was Arsenio's use of *contratiempo,* literally counter-time, that set his style apart rhythmically and directly affected the piano *montuno*. García identifies its main feature as being a more complex type of phrasing and accent than other groups. In particular, there is a relentless accenting of off-beats in all parts that contrasts with the more alternated accentuation of *guarachero* groups. This is most marked in the bass part, which in contrast with the anticipated bass, repeated *tresillo* or bolero pattern of other groups (see below), follows the rhythmic outline of both the melodic parts and the footwork of the *son montuno* dance steps, reinforcing their accents. According to García, the rhythmic accents of the dance steps had a greater effect on musical phrasing than the *clave* rhythm, and, as the dancers could not rely on a downbeat stress, a much greater involvement in, and understanding of, the music was necessary (García 2003: 141-156).

Guaracha dancing was considerably freer with a greater stress on downbeats and fewer specific movements (García 2003:239-240) According to Elpido Vazquez, bassist with Sonora Matancera from 1952:

> In Sonora the bass is the accompaniment because it forms the basis of the dancing. The bass is what marks the time for both the dancer and the other musicians[67] (quoted in Valaverde 1997:93).

For Sonora Matancera and other *guaracheros*, the first beat of the bar was frequently sounded by the bass in either a *tresillo*, *habanero* or *bolero* bass. For example, in the 1949 recordings made by Sonora for the Ansonia label, there are only two instances of a deviation from either *tresillo* or *bolero* and in both cases for a specific effect: both *Que Cintura* and *El Pipisigallo* feature an offbeat bass in unison with the piano, similar to the piano/bass pairing of Arsenio Rodríguez but less complex rhythmically (Anscd 1225,1535). Likewise, recordings made by Conjunto Colonial and Jovenes del Cayo between 1946 and 1951 alternate *tresillo* and *bolero* bass, again only deviating for a bass/piano pairing (eg Conjunto Colonial: *En Cutara* Victor 23-5426-2) or the rare use of anticipated bass (eg Jovenes del Cayo: *Deja la Cosa Como Está*). Only Kubavana made consistent use of the anticipated bass, or variants (eg *Rumba Moderna, Cerro Brinco, Que Se Vaya,* Tumbao TCD034). Example 6.5 provides an example of each type of bass line.

Ex 6.5



[66] El *tres* le daba el sonido característico del *son*, del *son* rancio

[67] En la Sonora el bajo es el acompañamiento porque es la base del bailador. El bajo es el que marca el tiempo al bailarín y, a la vez a los demás músicos

Arsenio's main structural development was the *diablo* section. In this final section of a song, a combination of trumpet counterpoint, a faster tempo and a frequently shortened *coro* dramatically increased the musical energy, representing a redressing of the balance within the structure of a *montuno* section. As I outlined in the previous chapter, the instrumental solo, usually piano, was an established feature by the 1940s and appeared after the main call and response section of the *montuno*. It was usually followed by a short return to call and response or a repetition of the introduction to finish. With an extended, harmonically and rhythmically adventurous solo, this type of ending was very abrupt (though of course in live performance it could have been far less so). *Guaracheros* addressed this problem by extending the final call and response section, adding further brass interludes or repeating more of the introductory section, in order to re-establish a balance in the structure. Arsenio, in contrast created a new, contrapuntal shared ostinato for the trumpet section, based on a continuation of the call and response but considerably more developed and following a rhythmically ambiguous instrumental break.

Austerlitz has noted how Afro-American music, which is based on a cyclical structure, 'leaps' from one state to another, often using the device of a break, rather than using a more gradual method to build tension (Austerlitz 2003: 109-110). Although Arsenio's *son montuno* structure presents a gradual build in tension, the final *diablo* section conforms to this pattern, coming immediately after an instrumental break and creating a surge in energy, with its new or shortened *coro* cycle.

Along with this heightened counterpoint, the internal structure of the *diablo* section also served to increase tension. This final section was often based on a shortened version of the of the *coro* (known as *picao*) or an completely new *coro*, which again might be shorter than the original (Sublette 2004; 507). Perna compares *picao* with *stretto* in fugue when 'parts enter in close succession without allowing for the complete exposition of the theme'; in other words *coro* or brass interrupt each other before the expected end of the phrase (Perna 2005: 110). For *conjunto* pianists, a *picao diablo*, in which the vocal cycle was shortened, made little structural difference to their role as the *tumbao* usually remained the same length. However, with a different *coro* for the *diablo* section, a second *montuno* was needed, and this was often constructed very differently from the first, contributing to the sudden change in momentum.

The division between the up-tempo, rhythmically straightforward *guaracha* and the slower and more complex *son montuno*, with its extended *diablo* section, translated into a growing divide between a *guarachero* piano style, based on general harmonic reinforcement (whether arpeggiated or chordal) and counter-melodic, and a *sonero* piano style in which the rhythmic accents, and sometimes melodic line of the singers were often closely followed (García 2003: 151). The comparatively simple rhythmic structure of *guaracha* demanded a more driving piano *montuno*, based on constant movement. However, although the *guaracha* piano could anticipate rhythmically and consistently accent off-beats, this was often counteracted by an on-beat bass line. The piano *montuno* of *soneros* in contrast was working with a *contratiempo* bass line and an interlocking *tres* part, often in rhythmic unison with both, and it was in this relationship - bass, *tres* and piano - that much of the difference between the two styles is found. As we saw in the previous chapter, in early 1940s Arsenio recordings

this often meant a *tres*/piano combination which accented a similar rhythmic line, but by the second half of the 1940s there was a much greater level of sophistication in this arranging. Both *tres* and piano were used to pick out accents in the melodic line, sometimes in unison, sometimes alternating, creating a mosaic of accentuation between piano, *tres* and bass. This required a much stricter interpretation of their individual parts on the part of musicians and although there was still variation within piano *montunos*, interlocking with other players, especially the *tresero* took precedence over personal interpretation.

Summary

The earlier racial and social division between jazz bands and *son* ensembles was further complicated by the growing racial categorisation of *conjuntos* in the second half of the 1940s. Musical style itself was being described in racial terms that could be unrelated to the performers concerned, and which affected the groups' social and economic position. Groups such as Conjunto Casino were able to compete with cabaret groups and jazz bands for the lucrative high class cabarets while others such as Arsenio Rodríguez maintained the position of *son montuno* as a black, working class genre. A stronger sense of identity emerged from this continued polarisation, particularly amongst Afro-Cuban musicians, who often preferred playing for a more appreciative and committed audience which could share in the celebration of Afro-Cuban life in *guaguancós* dedicated to local barrios.

Musical differences between the two approaches were marked in structure, style and instrumentation. The verse/chorus structure of *guarachas* spawned a number of variants and led to a clear compartmentalised sequence of different sections, while the structure of *son montuno* and *guaguancó* favoured a gradual build in intensity towards the *diablo* section, whether in the traditional *largo/montuno* format or in the more recent *montuno*-only structure. *Guarachas* were faster, with a simpler rhythmic structure while *son montuno* and *guaguancó* maintained a slower speed to accommodate a more complex accenting of off-beats. Instrumentally the retention of the *tres* by *soneros* also contributed to this counterpoint of interlocking accents, as did the three trumpets, when used contrapuntally in the *diablo* section. These structural differences created new musical contexts for pianists and led to a greater divergence of playing styles amongst *conjunto* pianists.

6.2 *Guaracheros*

As I outlined in the previous chapter, many features that would become standard in salsa piano *montunos* - such as hands in parallel motion; octave counter-melody or pedal notes, often with arpeggiation in between; an emphasis on the sixth note of the scale; syncopation; quaver anticipation; staggered anticipation with the bass - were present in the early 1940s *conjunto*. However, during the second half of the 1940s when the stylistic divide between *guaracheros* and *soneros* became more marked, these features became more associated with the *guarachero* style, while the *contratiempo* of *soneros* moved pianists in a different direction.

Although pianists could use a variety of approaches to the piano *montuno*, sometimes within a single song, their own personal style also dictated how they approached accompanying. In some cases

the difference between subsequent pianists could strongly affect the feel of recordings. Conjunto Colonial, for example, recorded initially with Carlos Faxos on piano between 1946 and 1947, resulting in a series of recordings such as *Fuera la Careta, Cepillando* and *Ahí Viene el Verdulero* in which the use of a vamp style is frequent (Tumbao TCD047). Later pianists in Colonial, such as Rey Díaz Calvert and Pepé Delgado made much greater use of a more arpeggiated *montuno* style, even in verse sections, altering the overall feel.

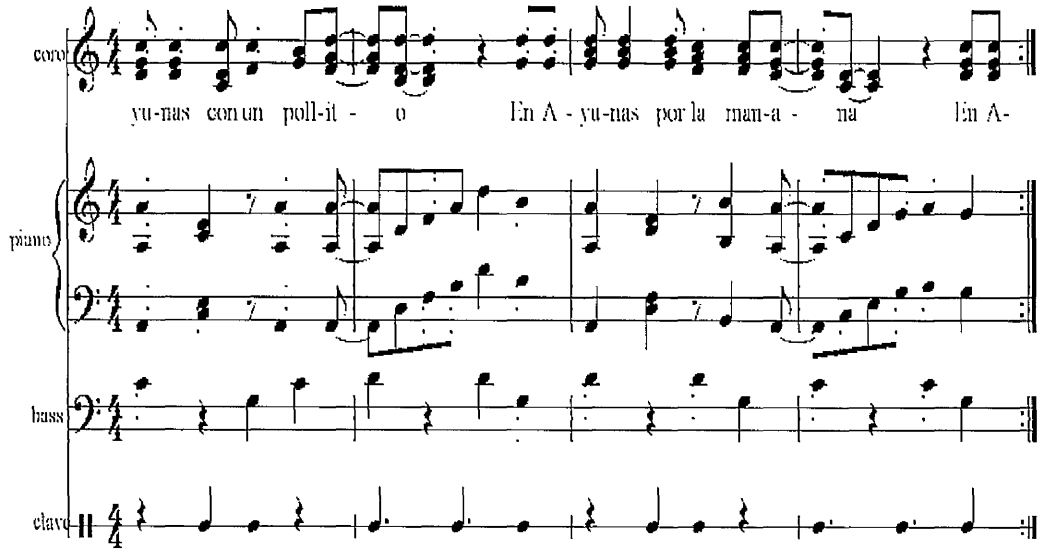
Individual styles can also help identify pianists on specific recordings. As I detailed in the previous chapter, Conjunto Casino had a series of pianists in the second half of the 1940s, following the departure of *El Diablo Rojo*. The 1947 recordings are particularly hard to pin down. According to Díaz Ayala, Casino worked with both René Urbino and Augustín Mercier during that year but there is no information for individual recordings (Díaz Ayala 2002: Seccion 01C: 436). However, songs such as *El Sordo*, recorded with Urbino in 1946, reveal a much greater use of the upper registers of the piano and a less consistent use of vamping in general, while *Cuánto Se Debe*, recorded with Mercier in 1948, has a clear distinction between a strong vamp in verse sections and a more syncopated, counter-melodic *montuno*. This would suggest, for example, that *Ay Nicolás* (cited below) was recorded with René Urbino, given the constant change in piano style between different sections and the concentration on upper registers.

There was still a great deal of experimentation by pianists during this period. While the basis for creating a piano *montuno* remained imitation of the *tres,* in the combination of melody or counter-melody with arpeggiated accompaniment, pianists often resorted to more established piano techniques such as a chordal vamp or static pedal notes. In this section I analyse the most common types of *guarachero* piano *montuno* in order to establish which later standard features (mentioned above) were already regularly present. I also examine how the sectional structure affected the type of piano *montuno* played, and in what way the innovations of Arsenio Rodríguez and the *soneros* impacted on the *guarachero* style.

Stylistic features of *guarachero montunos*

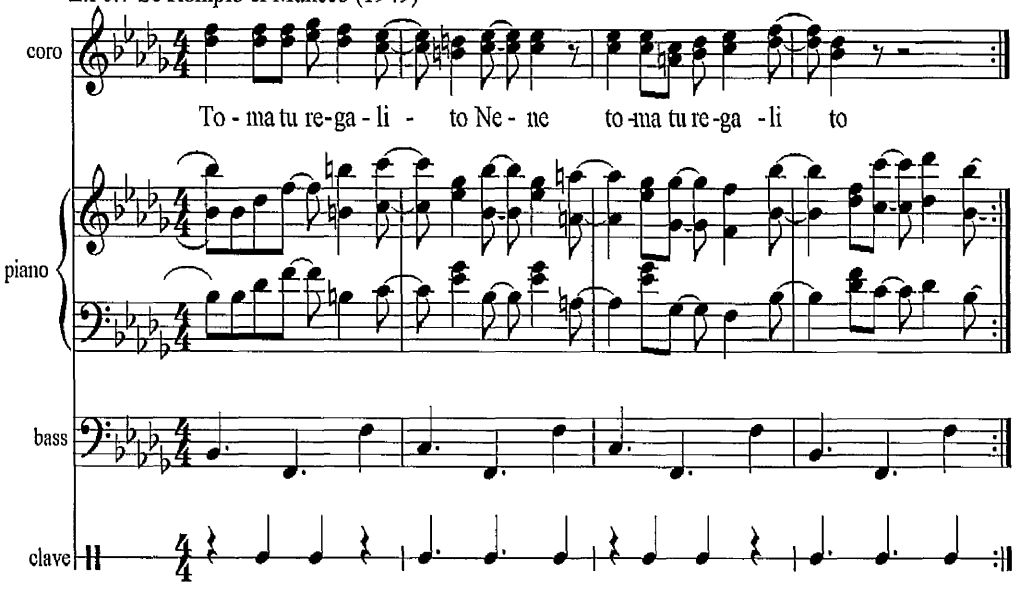
By the second half of the 1940s, there was a greater level of consistency in the structuring of piano *montunos* and certain elements were regularly featured. Ex 6.6 (CD2:19, 1'06'') shows a section from the vocal call and response section in *En Ayunas con un Pollito*, recorded by Conjunto Colonial in 1949 with Rey Díaz Calvert on piano and described as a *guaracha*. The piano *montuno* contains many of what would become standard features in later Cuban styles and pan-American salsa: the piano *montuno* (and therefore *tumbao*) spans two *claves* and has a (comparatively unsyncopated) counter-melody in octaves which is built around a sixth note pedal, giving the chord progression dominant 11^{th} to tonic added 6^{th}; the octave counter-melody is interspersed with sporadic chords and arpeggiation; the *montuno* functions as a counter rhythm to the 2:3 *clave* in that the piano sounds the first beat of the bar on the two side and anticipates on the three side; although the bass is not anticipated, there is quaver anticipation in the piano *montuno* (which parallels that of the *coro*) giving the *montuno* a rare moment of syncopation.

Ex 6.6 En Ayunas con un Pollito (1949)



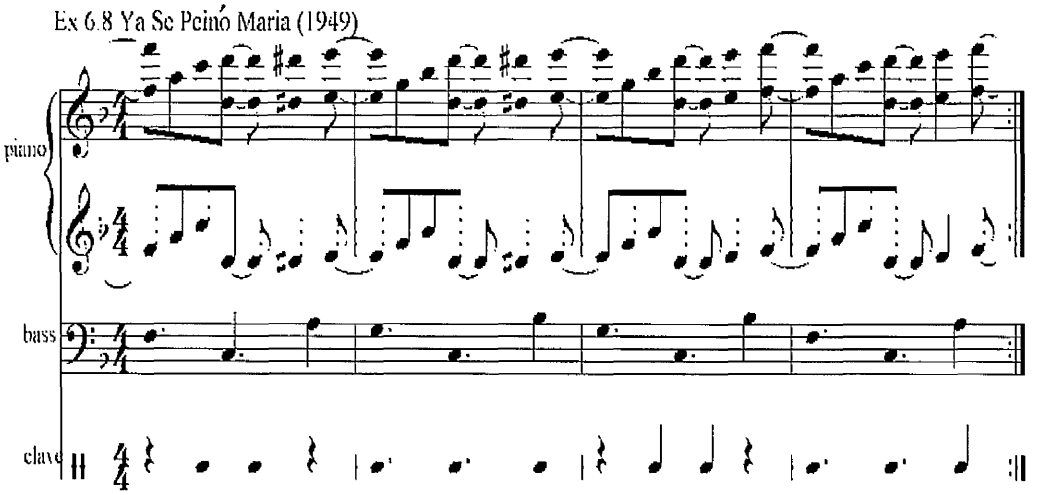
The following examples, both from songs recorded by Sonora Matancera in 1949 with Lino Frías on piano, contain many of the same features as well as revealing a much greater level of syncopation and melodic, as well as rhythmic, anticipation. The *montuno* for *Se Rompió el Muñeco* (Ex 6.7, CD2:20, 1'55') has the octave counter-melody constantly pushing against the beat with quaver anticipation at the end of every bar and a melodic anticipation of the subsequent harmony. However, the bassist plays the tresillo rhythm (see Ex 6.5) and does not anticipate. The only piano arpeggiation appears in the first bar of the *montuno*; in the rest, momentum is maintained by almost constant off-beat accentuation.

Ex 6.7 Se Rompió el Muñeco (1949)



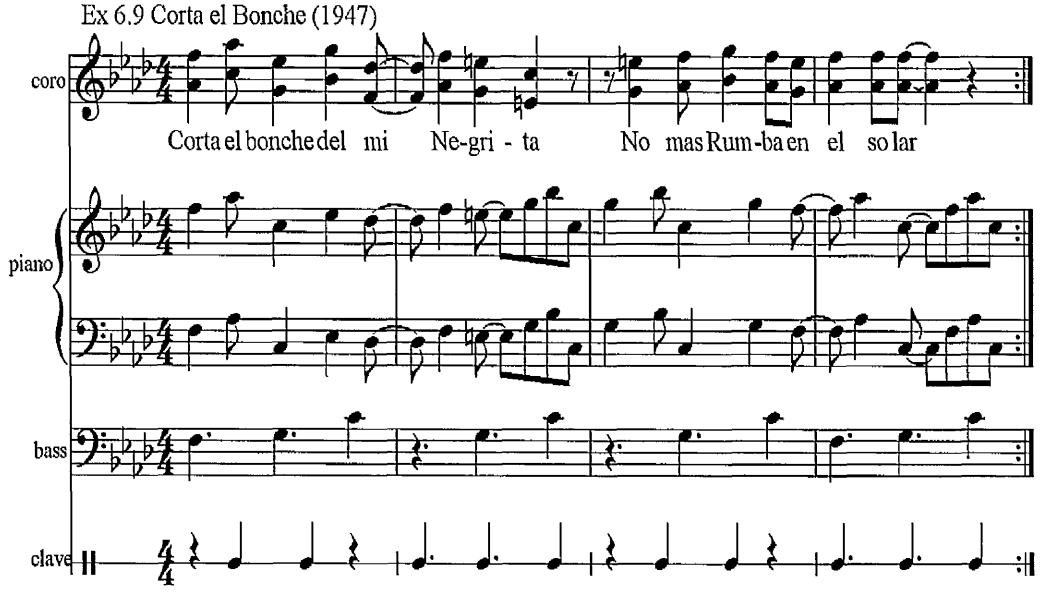
The *montuno* for *Ya Se Peinó María* is even more consistently syncopated, with a relentless anticipation. Again the anticipation is both rhythmic and melodic and, while in the previous example the piano's melodic anticipation coincided harmonically with the dominant of the bass, thus avoiding a harmonic clash, in this instance the piano pushes harmonically into the next bar ahead of the harmonic implication of the bass, rather than behind it, as would be the case with the standard anticipated bass (Ex 6.8, CD2:21, 1'16'').

Ex 6.8 Ya Se Peinó Maria (1949)



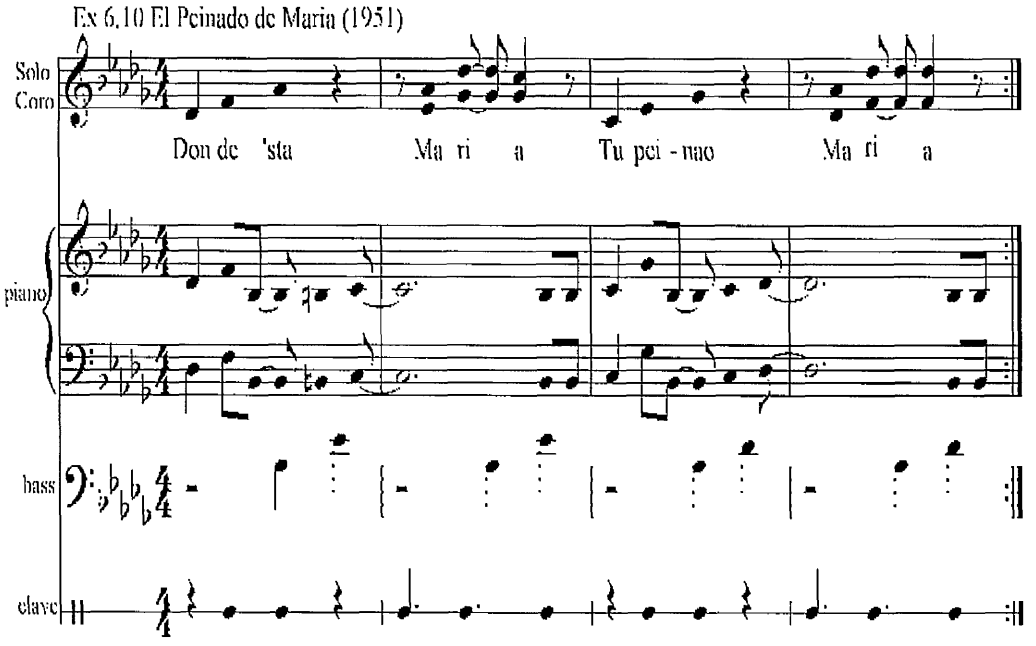
Octave doubling in the right hand was not yet an automatic feature; likewise, arpeggiation still could appear at the end of phrases, rather than during the ostinato, recalling the *tres* of *changüi* and earlier styles of *son montuno*. Conjunto Kubavana's *Corta el Bonche* (1947, pianist Eulogio Castelero) has a fairly syncopated *montuno* which moves from the melodic to the counter-melodic, with a combination of melodic duplication and harmonic reinforcement at the end of the phrase (Ex 6.9, CD2:22, 0'55'').

Ex 6.9 Corta el Bonche (1947)



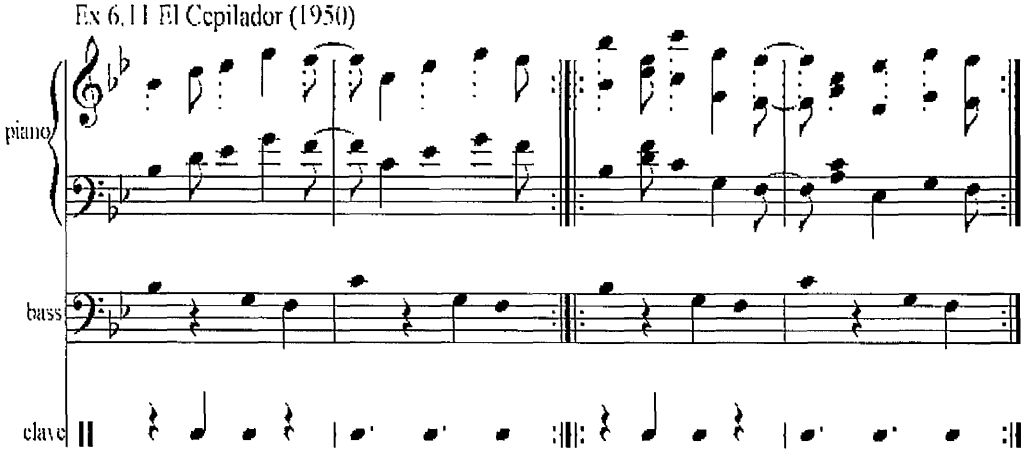
In *El Peinado de María*, recorded by Jovenes del Cayo in 1951 with Silvio Contreras on piano, the piano *montuno* again moves quickly from the melodic to the counter-melodic, functioning as part of the call and response sequence between solo vocalist and *coro*. Initially implying a melodic *montuno*, Contreras diverges from the vocal line to a counter-melodic theme which remains static for the *coro* response, avoiding arpeggiation all together (Ex 6.10, CD2:23, 0'49'').

Ex 6.10 El Peinado de Maria (1951)



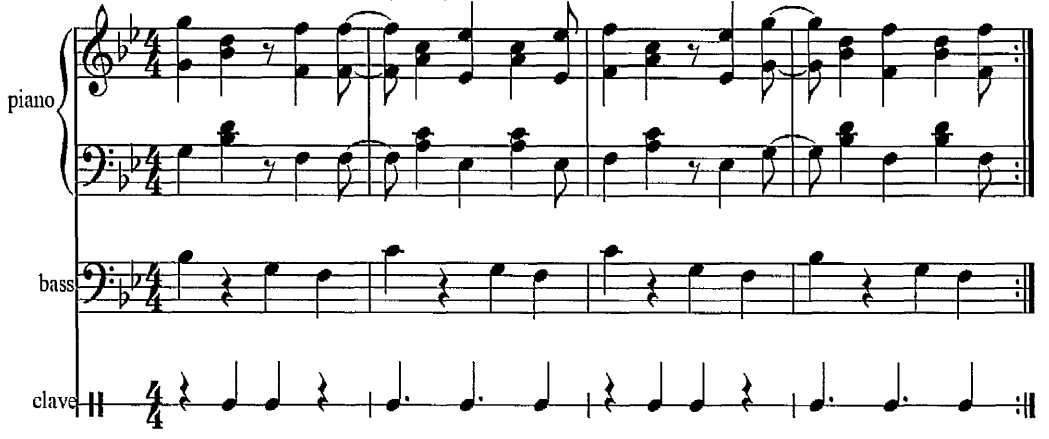
In some *montunos*, the driving momentum is provided entirely by syncopation without any arpeggiation, as in the following two examples from Gloria Matancera, both with Alejandro Sosa on piano. Ex 6.11 shows two piano *montunos* of one *clave* length, from *El Cepilador*, recorded in 1950, the first from the *coro!* solo trumpet call and response section, the second from after the piano solo (CD2:24, 1'04'', 2'44').

Ex 6.11 El Cepilador (1950)



Ex 6.12 shows a two-*clave montuno* from *La Comadre Dorotea*, also from 1950. In both examples, the unsyncopated bass interlocks rhythmically with the *montuno* (playing a very similar line in the first example) to the extent that only the very first note of each two-bar sequence is sounded by both instruments. In this way a greater clarity is achieved and in both of these instances, energy is not generated by use of constant quaver arpeggiation by one instrument, but by the combination of bass and piano, interlocking to cover almost all the quaver beats with the piano a quaver behind the bass (CD3: 1, 0'50'').

Ex 6.12 La Comadre Dorotea (1950)

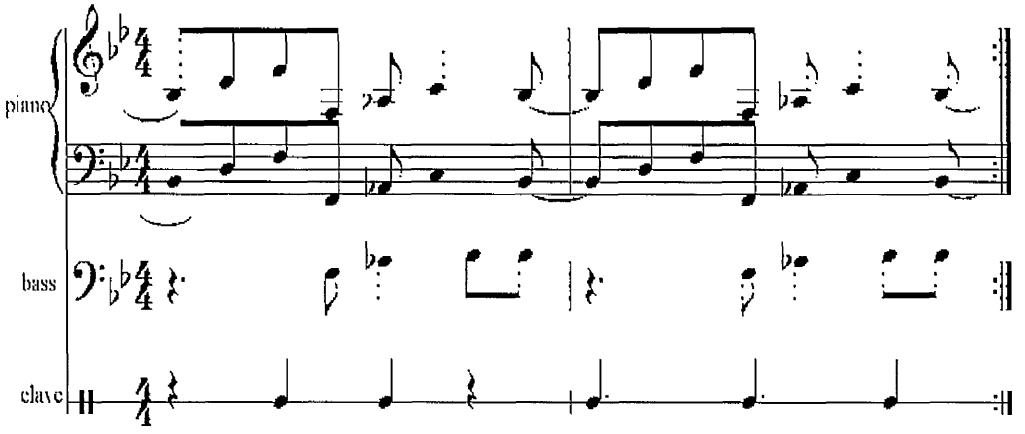


Staggered anticipation

Although some groups, such as Sonora Matancera, were known for bass lines which always sounded the first beat of the bar, others had begun to use a fourth crotchet bass anticipation, producing the characteristic staggered anticipation between bass and piano. However, this was still not an automatic or consistent feature, even with anticipation in both instruments. The one-bar, harmonically static *montuno* for *Echa Pa'Alla Chico* (Conjunto Casino 1950, piano Roberto Alvarez) has staggered

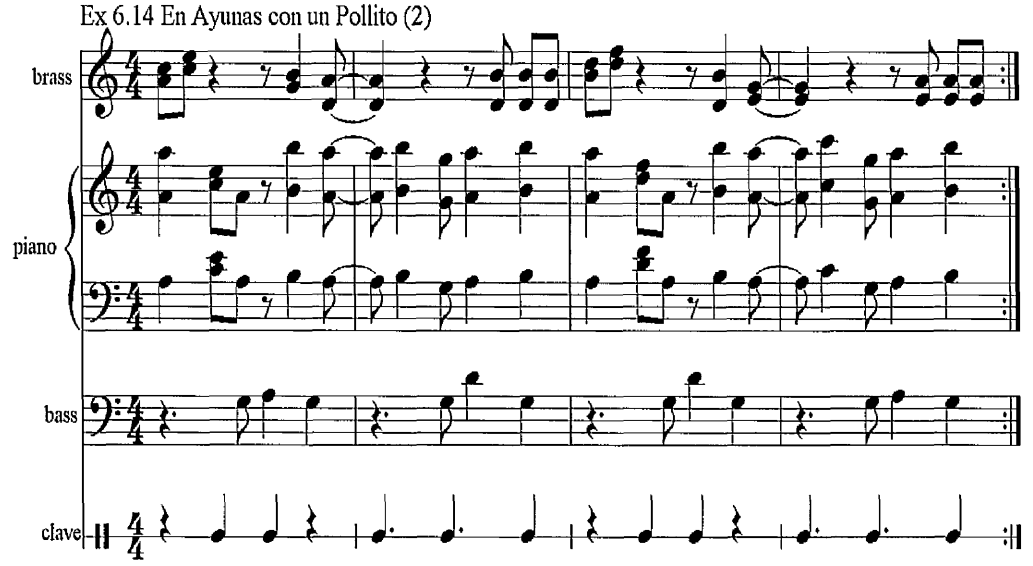
anticipation (both rhythmic and harmonic) between bass and piano on both sides of the *clave*; however, the rhythmic effect is lessened by the repeated quaver in the bass, resulting in a shared quaver anticipation which effectively cancels the staggered anticipation (Ex 6.13, CD3:2,0'42'').

Ex 6.13 Echa Pa' Alla Chico (1950)



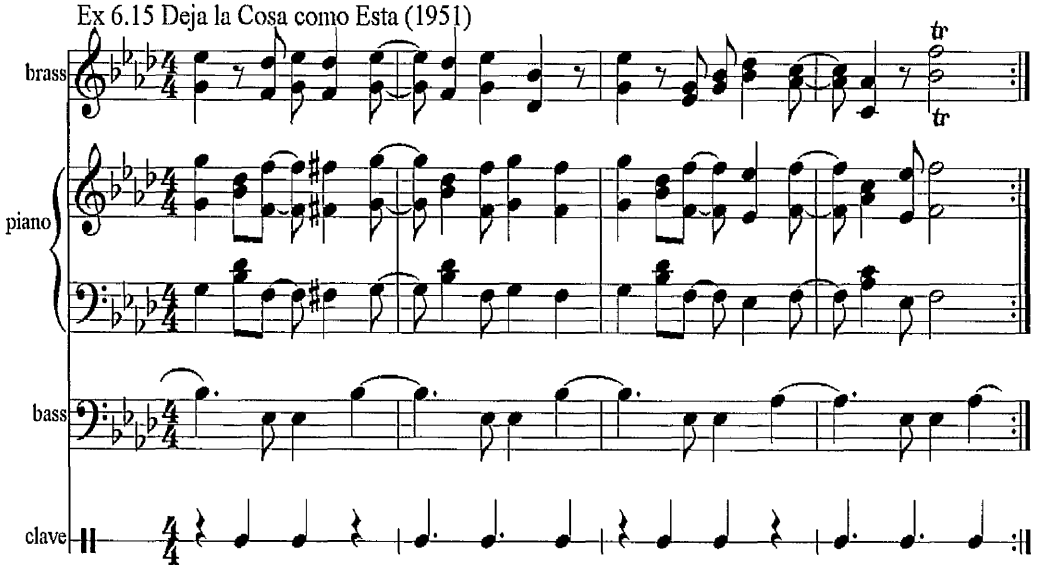
A second *montuno* from *En Ayunas con un Pollito* (Conjunto Colonial, 1949) this time played during a brass interlude, shows how bass players could vary their contribution as much as pianists, thus altering rhythmic relationships with other members of the *tumbao*. Because of the anticipated bass variant in this section (unlike in the *coro* section quoted above, Ex 6.6) there is a much clearer staggered anticipation between bass and piano and, in this instance, brass as well (Ex 6.14, CD2:19, 2'10'').

Ex 6.14 En Ayunas con un Pollito (2)



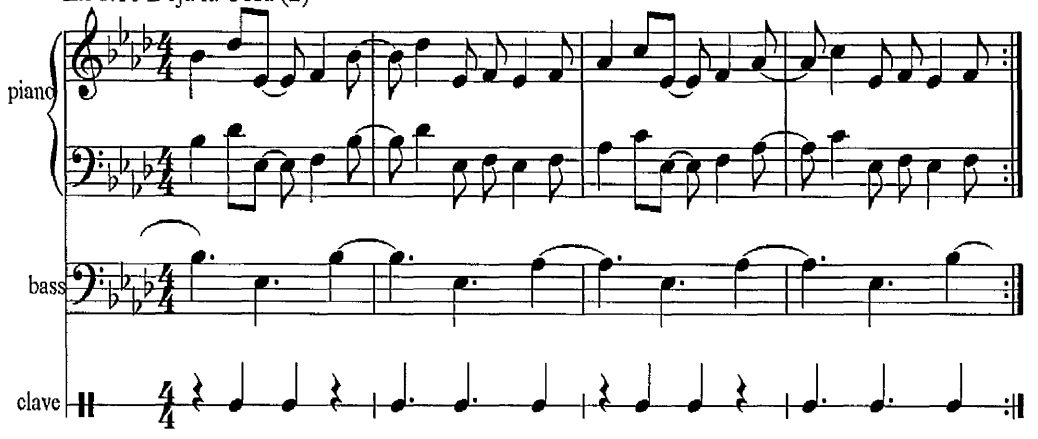
As the two examples from *En Ayunas* show, both pianists and bassists often changed mid song and this would affect shared rhythmic relationships. The following two examples are from *Deja la Cosa Como Está*, recorded by Jovenes del Cayo in 1951 with Silvio Contreras on piano. Although the piano *montuno* provides a staggered anticipation (with the bass) every two bars, this alternates with a variety of rhythmic structures. In the first example, heard during a trumpet interlude, Contreras uses strong octave movement and anticipation to cut through the brass. He stresses, with the bass, the final crotchet of the 3 side of the *clave* in the first part of the *tumbao* and, with the brass, the final minim of the second (Ex 6.15, CD3:3, 1'08'').

Ex 6.15 Deja la Cosa como Esta (1951)



In the second example, which comes immediately afterwards, he loses the octaves in the right hand, reducing the density and allowing the *bongó* solo to be heard (Ex 6.16, CD 3:3, 1'34'').

Ex 6.16 Deja la Cosa (2)



Chordal and Octave Reinforcement

By the second half of the 1940s, *guarachero* pianists had developed a fairly consistent rhythmic structure for the sporadic chords and octaves that cut through the constant arpeggiation of *montunos*. For the *tresero*, chords were rare and octaves slightly more random as they depended on which of the three sets of double strings were used - of these, the outer two were tuned in octaves and the central one in unison. In contrast, the piano *montuno* of *guarachero* pianists has a deliberate placing of chords (in both hands) and octaves (in the right hand) working together with and in counter to the *clave* rhythm, so that certain key points within the rhythmic cycle regularly have chordal or octave reinforcement.

Using time box notation of the sixteen quaver beats, Ex 6.17 shows the placing of piano chords in the two-bar *montuno* cycle from the *son*gs transcribed above, all of which have a 2:3 *clave*. The most consistent point is on first *clave* note, with the other two points avoiding coinciding with the *clave* rhythm, instead sounding just after or before.

Ex 6.17 Placing of Chords within the piano *montuno*

En Ayunas			•												
Muñeco 1									•				•		
El Cepilador			•						•						
La Comadre			•						•				•		
Que No Se Acabe													•		
En Ayunas 2			•												
Deja la Cosa 1			•						•						
Clave			•		•				•			•		•	

Octave reinforcement is of greater interest as it is considerably more audible and accented, and serves to reveal the internal counter-melody of the *montuno* (Ex 6.18). In this, the most important beat is the first of the (2:3) cycle. The other key moments are immediately after the second note of the *clave*, the eighth quaver (contributing to staggered quaver anticipation) and the *bombo* note on the three side. Of these, only the *bombo* note coincides with the *clave*, the rest being counter rhythmic (the exception being *Que No Se Acabe* which sounds a greater number of *clave* beats).

Ex 6.18 Placing of Octaves within the piano *montuno*

En Ayunas 1	•					•		•								
Muñeco 1	•					•		•				•				•
El Cepilador	•			•		•		•				•		•		•
La Comadre	•					•		•				•				•
Que no se Acabe	•			•	•							•			•	•
En Ayunas 2	•					•		•		•		•		•		•
Deja la Cosa 1	•			•		•		•				•				
clave			•		•				•			•			•	

The placing of chords and octaves within the cycle of the *tumbao* here reveals a striking similarity to their placing in the piano *montuno* of the representative salsa *tumbao* that I cited in Chapter 1 (ex 1.1). This shows the extent to which rhythmic structures that have become an integral part of salsa were already present during this later 1940s period. The piano *montunos* from the early 1940s that I examined in Chapter 5 had some octave reinforcement but sporadic chords were considerably less frequent. Likewise in the *danzón montunos* I examined in Chapter 4, many from this later 1940s period, there is no octave doubling in the right hand but some sporadic chords, many of which are found in the same points of the cycle as the *guarachero montunos*. In the *guarachero conjuntos* of this period, the use of both octaves and chords was combined and formalised, and both were scattered within piano *montunos* at strictly observed points in the cycle.

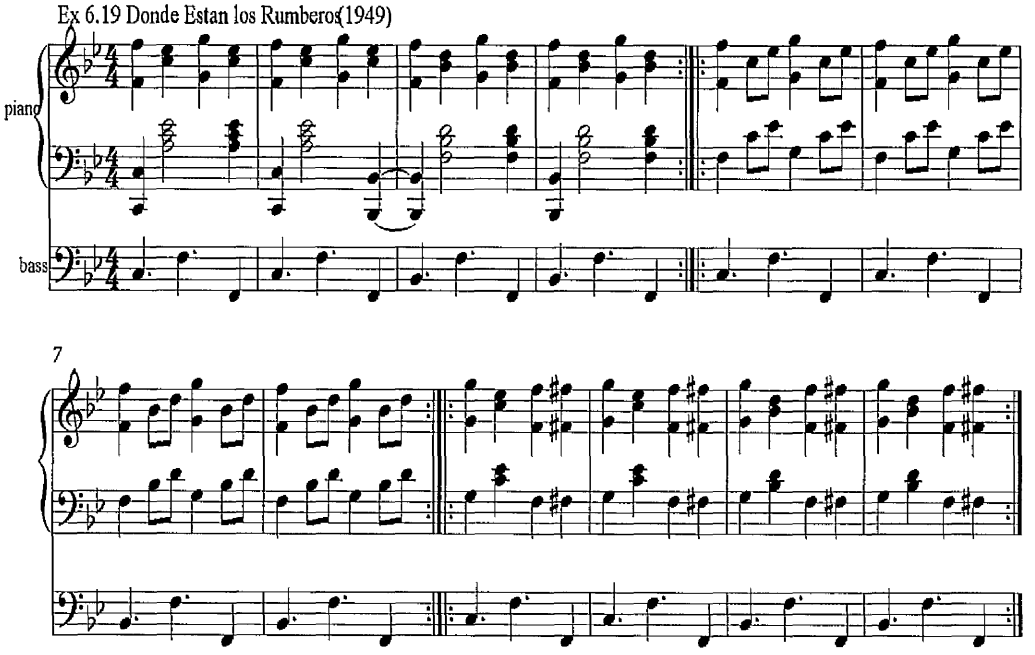
Rhythmically static *montunos* and pedal notes

As with the early 1940s *montunos*, the constant movement and syncopation that would become a feature of much salsa piano contrasts with a more static, chordal style of playing in which syncopation plays little or no part. As well as being more static rhythmically (though sometimes including some arpeggiation) these *montunos* lack the melodic and harmonic anticipation of the previous examples, leading to a much less driving quality. However, they still contain key elements such as parallel hands, octave reinforcement in the right hand and counter-melodic pedal notes, especially concentrating on the dominant and sixth note of the scale. Within a slower rhythmic rate, they combine melodic and counter-melodic playing with interspersed chordal or arpeggiated harmonic support.

Some of these elements serve to underline a repeated dominant or sixth note pedal within a second inversion chord. The piano *montuno* in *Donde Están los Rumberos*, recorded in 1949 by Sonora Matancera, for example, uses various devices to highlight a pedal that moves between the fifth and sixth notes (Ex 6.19, CD3:4). The first version has a left hand vamp (different from the bass line and anticipating at the end of the second bar) and a right hand that combines the octave pedal notes with offbeat chords (1'36''); the second version unites both hands in a more arpeggiated ostinato, with parallel motion and a consistent arpeggiation between the octave pedal notes taking the place of offbeat chords (1'57''); the third returns to a more static, chordal style, this time with the addition of a

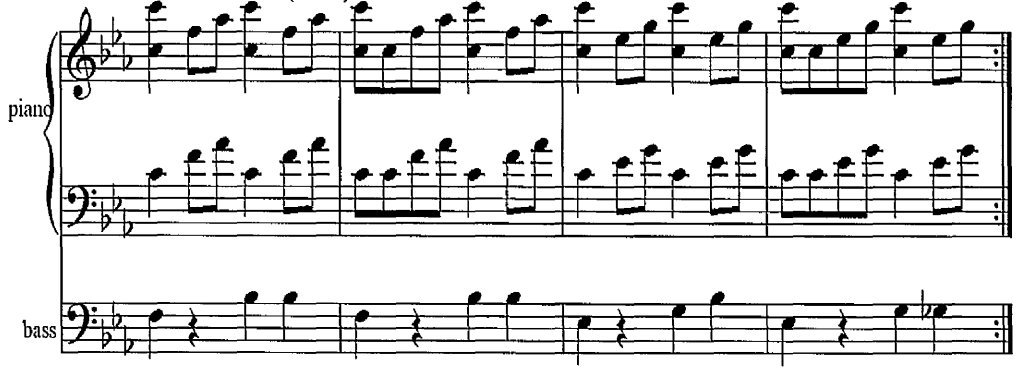
chromatic passing note to more fluidly link the fifth and sixth degrees, but with the hands still in unison (2'05'').

Ex 6.19 Donde Estan los Rumberos(1949)



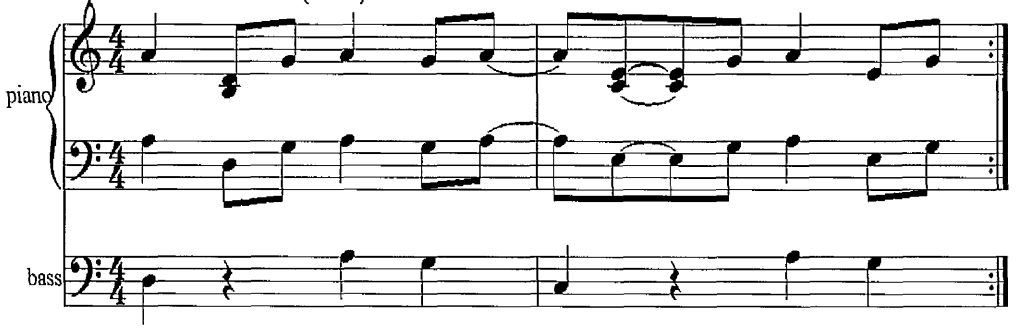
El Limoncito, recorded in 1950 by Gloria Matancera, shows a similar octave isolation of the sixth note pedal (Ex 6.20, CD3:5, 1'11''. As with the first *montuno* from *En Ayunas* (Ex 6.6) the placing of the sixth note at the top of the chord produces a characteristic chord progression - a dominant 11^{th} resolving to a tonic added 6^{th}.

Ex 6.20 El Limoncito (1950)



Likewise Gloria's *El Directivo* (1948), although not isolating the sixth note via octaves, maintains the same chord progression and voicing in a one-*clave*, slightly more syncopated *montuno* in which the sixth note is reinforced by the bass line (Ex 6.21, CD3:6, 1'46'').

Ex 6.21 El Directivo (1948)

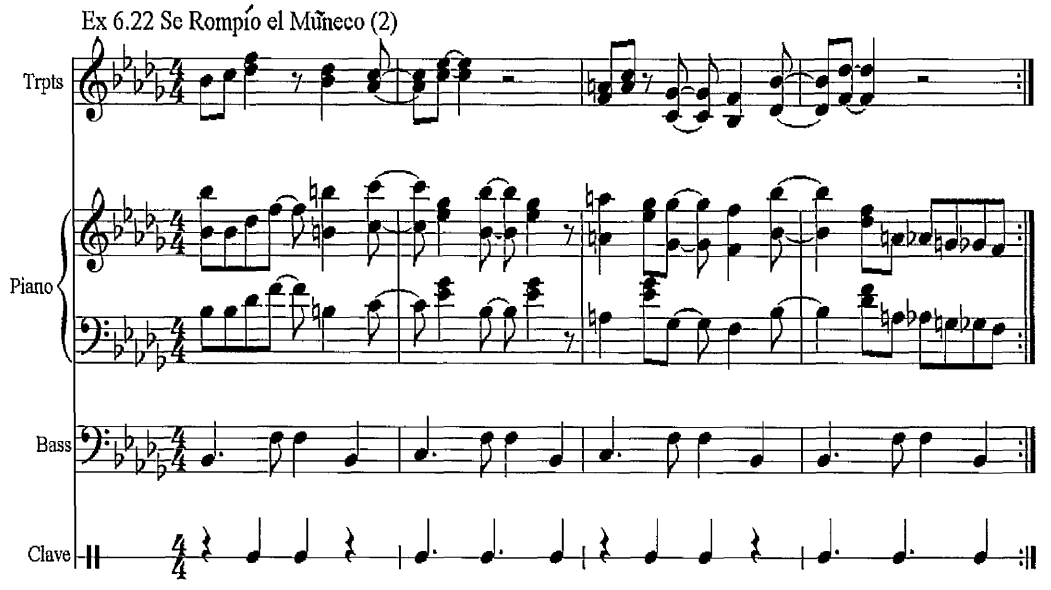


Sectional Structure and Multiple *Montunos*

A major factor in the use by pianists of different types of *montuno* within one song was the sectional nature of *guarachas* with their verse/chorus alternation and regular brass interludes. This often prompted a change in the piano part, whether within the verse or *montuno* sections, and gave pianists an opportunity to vary their playing in a more consistent way.

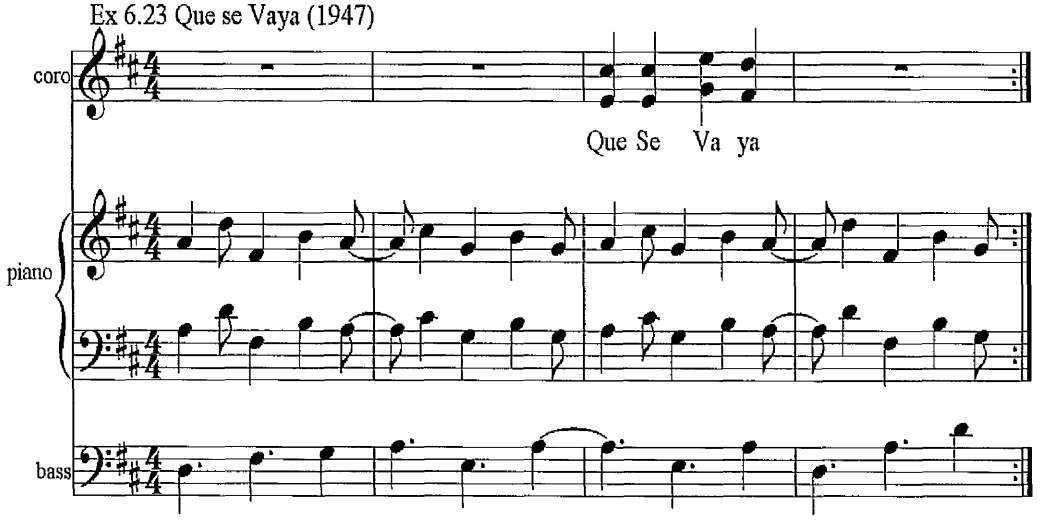
In some instances, the change in piano *montuno* can be subtle and not clearly related to a sectional change. In Sonora's *Se Rompió el Muñeco* (1949) for example, the second version of the piano *montuno* (Ex 6.22, CD 2:20, 2'18''), found during the brass interlude, shows a much clearer acknowledgement of the *clave* in its rhythmic shape, with the sounding of the A natural at the beginning of the third bar, rather than its anticipation in the earlier version (Ex 6.7). This stress on the two side of the *clave* also coincides with the trumpets, while the chromatic anacrusis at the end of the *tumbao* covers a more static moment in the brass. However, comparing it with the first version, the *coro* there has a similar rhythmic outline to the trumpets here, suggesting that it was not a different rhythmic shape in the brass that prompted the change, rather a more general desire to vary the *montuno* and contribute to a different feel for this section.

Ex 6.22 Se Rompío el Mũneco (2)

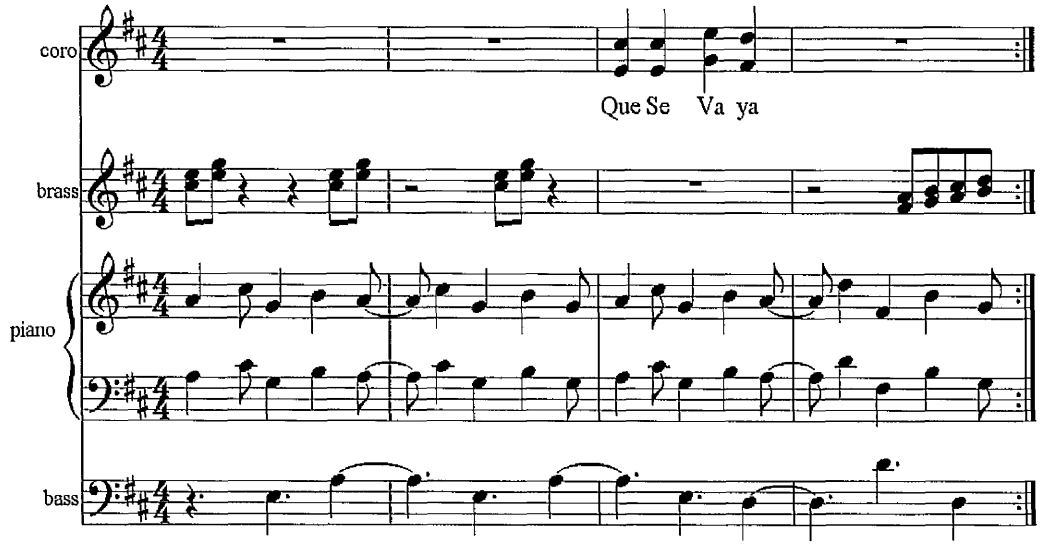


In some instances, a change in section prompts a harmonic change in the *tumbao*, thus automatically changing the piano *montuno*. Kubavana's *Que Se Vaya*, recorded in 1947 with Eulogio Castelero on piano, has a different harmonic sequence for the solo vocalist/ *coro* call and response from the later brass interlude (which also includes the *coro*). The rhythm of the piano *montuno* does not change, simply the harmony of the first bar from tonic (Ex 6.23, CD3:7, 0'45'') to dominant (Ex 6.24. 2'00''). However, the change in the bass line to a more consistent anticipation in the second example creates a staggered anticipation at the end of the first and third bars which, in the third bar, coincides with vocal harmonic anticipation. Thus, as with the two *montunos* from Colonial's *En Ayunas*, quoted above (Ex 6.6, 6.14) changes in other instrumental parts, and the rhythmic and harmonic tension produced by this change, can alter the structure and role of the piano *montuno*.

Ex 6.23 Que se Vaya (1947)

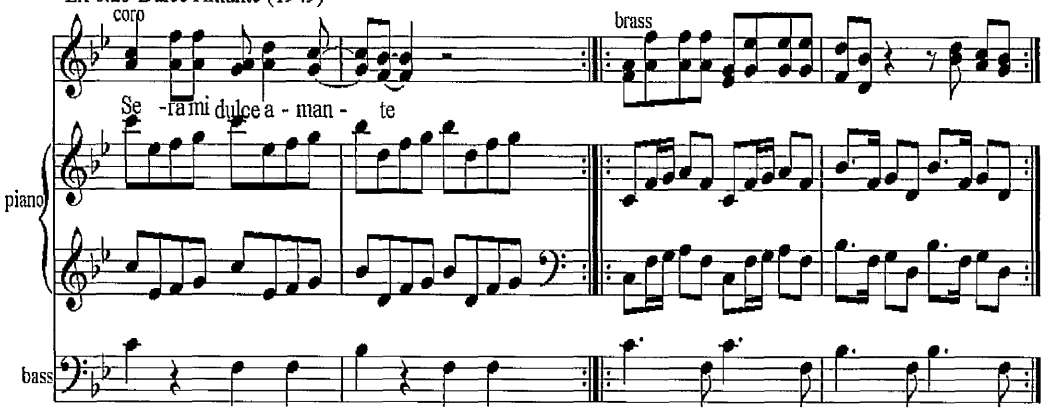


Ex 6.24 Que Se Vaya (2)



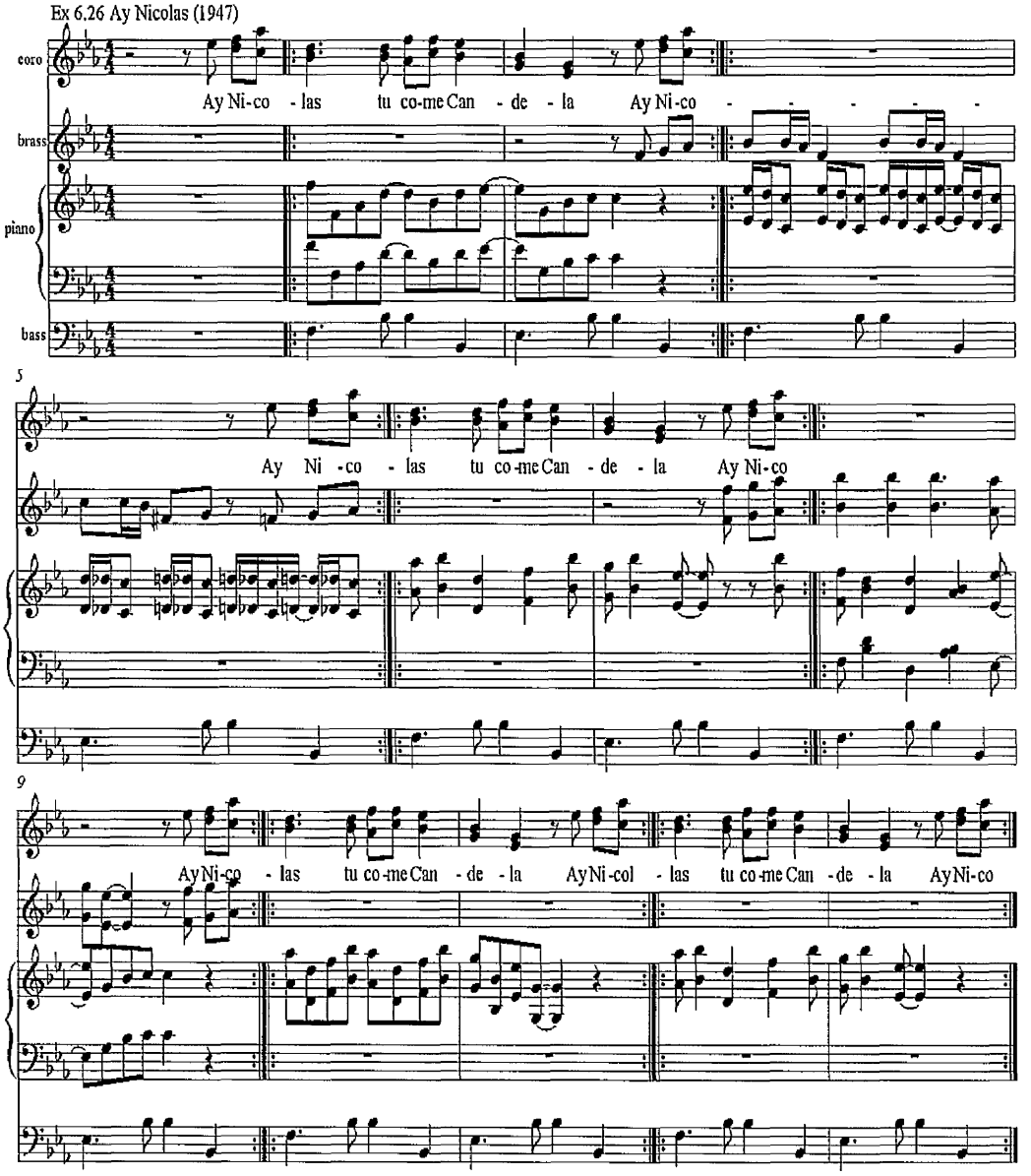
Sometimes the change in piano part is much more radical, resulting in a completely different role for the instrument within the *tumbao*. Sonora's *Mi Dulce Amante*, for example has an even, arpeggiated *montuno* for the vocal call and response but a much denser, dotted ostinato for the brass interlude (Ex 6.25, CD3:8, 1'17'', 2'07'').

Ex 6.25 Dulce Amante (1949)



Six different sections in *Ay Nicolás* by Conjunto Casino reveal the extent to which this type of structure could be carefully worked out in advance (Ex 6.26, CD3:9 0'50''). The different piano *montunos* are clearly not completely improvised but designed with the different sections in mind, especially with regard to the brass interludes. The first straightforward, arpeggiated, slightly syncopated *montuno* becomes, in the first brass interlude, a much more frantic, semiquaver-based ostinato, clearly functioning as a rhythmic and melodic counterpoint to the semiquaver trumpet line. That the fourth *montuno*, with the second (different) brass interlude, retains the same shape as the third (with vocals) confirms that the pianist (probably René Urbino) is reacting to the specifics of this brass interlude, which is far less rhythmically dense, rather than just repeating the semiquaver motif from the previous one. The fifth *montuno* represents another change, this time to an unsyncopated arpeggiation before the pianist reverts back to the third *montuno*.

Ex 6.26 Ay Nicolas (1947)

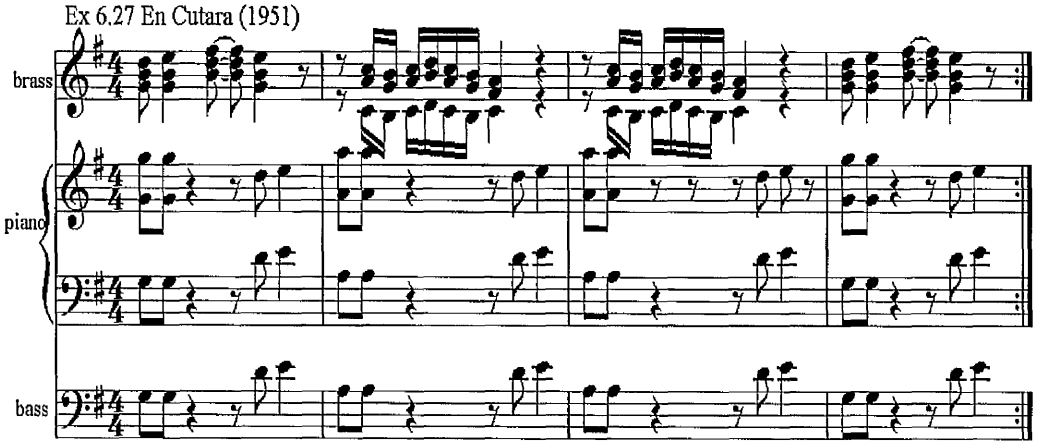


Sonero Influence

Although *guaracheros* and *soneros* had significant musical differences, this is not to say that there was no mutual influence or crossover between them. *Guaracheros* would have been aware of Arsenio's different approach to rhythm in the *tumbao* and, from the mid 1940s of his development of the *diablo* section with its characteristic counterpoint and shortened phrase lengths.

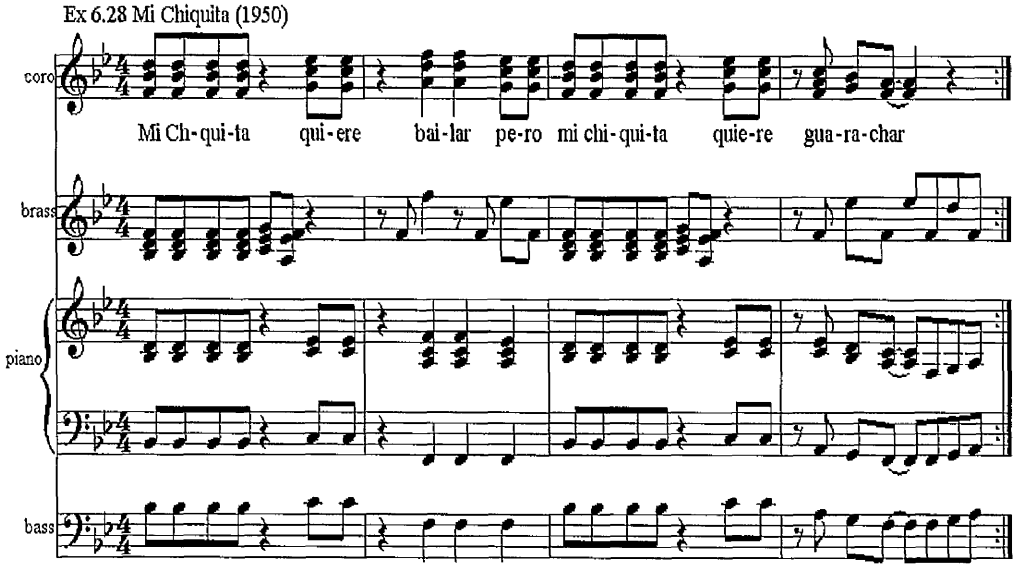
The rhythmic pairing of bass and piano, common in the work of both Arsenio and Los Astros, is found in some *guarachero montunos*, in combination with a brass interlude. In Colonial's *En Cutara* (1951) for example, the trumpets provide a rhythmic and melodic reply to the piano/bass unison riff (Ex 6.27, CD3:10, 2'02'').

Ex 6.27 En Cutara (1951)



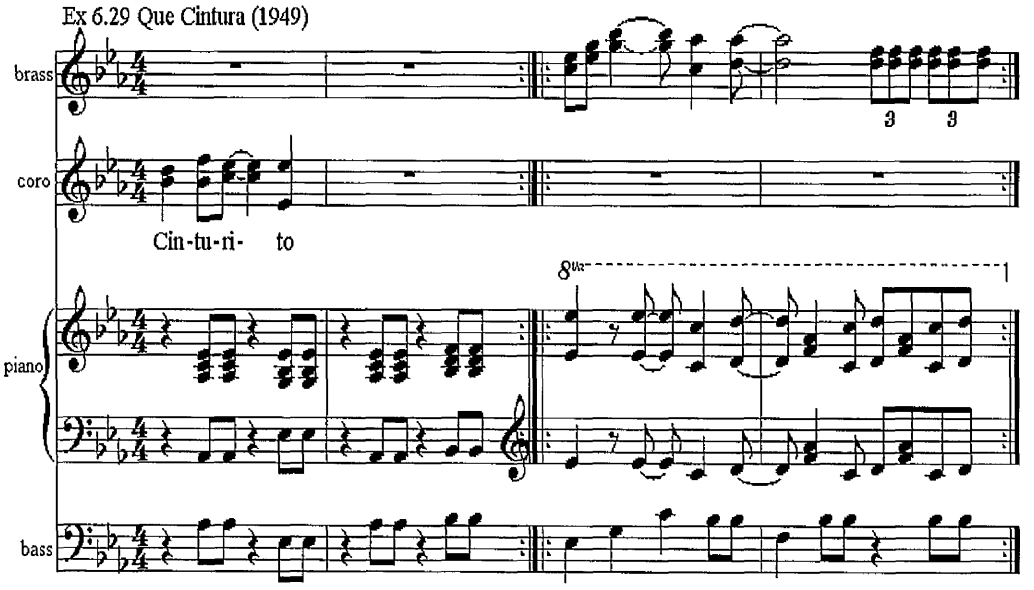
In Conjunto Casino's *Mi Chiquita Quiere Guarachar* (1950) the piano/bass pairing is in rhythmic unison with the *coro*, while the trumpets alternate rhythmic unison with an interlocking ostinato (Ex 6.28, CD3:11, 0'29'').

Ex 6.28 Mi Chiquita (1950)



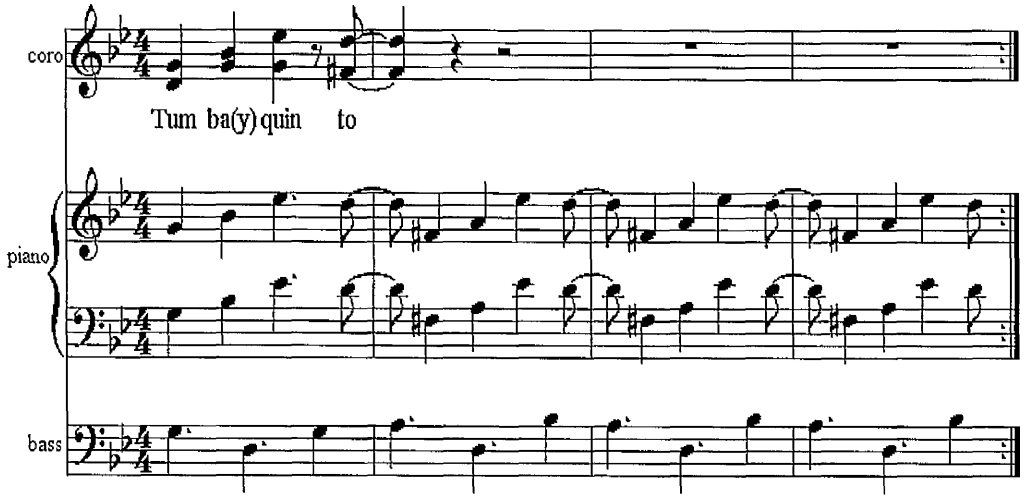
Sonora's *Que Cintura* (1949) contrasts *afro*-style off-beat chords for the vocal call and response, with a radically different syncopated *montuno* for the brass interlude which comes after the piano solo and before the final call and response; this also involves a change in harmonic sequence. The sudden increase in syncopation, combined with the new progression and a move to a much higher piano register, creates an immediate increase in energy, reminiscent of the *diablo* section of Arsenio (Ex 6.29, CD 3:12, 0'49'').

Ex 6.29 Que Cintura (1949)



Sonora Matancera's *Tumba y Quinto* (1949) shows the influence of Arsenio Rodríguez in the use of *picao*, the introduction of a shortened and often different *montuno* in the *diablo* section. In the first section it has a melodic piano *montuno*, rhythmically distinct from the bass line, which completes the four bar phrase initiated by the *coro*. Like the *montuno* in *Corta el Bonche* (Ex 6.9) it is reminiscent of a *changüí tres montuno* in which the *tresero* would reinforce the harmony at the end of a melodic phrase. In this case the *coro* is so short that the harmonic reinforcement forms most of the phrase (Ex 6.30, CD3:13, 1'50'').

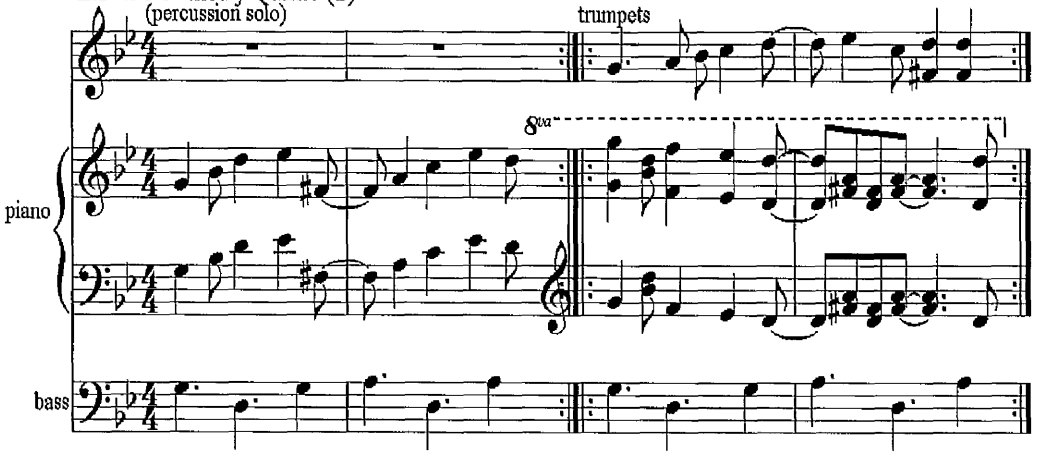
Ex 6.30 Tumba y Quinto (1949)



The second version of the *montuno* is halved in length (Ex 6.31, 2'06''). However this

happens before the solo (in this instance *bongó*) rather than after, and the tension is further increased at the end of the solo by the introduction of a completely new counter-melodic *montuno* (2'16''). This much higher *montuno* is introduced at the same time as a new brass line, moving in a contrary direction to it, and further increasing the momentum.

Ex 6.31 Tumba y Quinto (2)



Summary

In the second half of the 1940s, *guarachero* pianists continued to construct *montunos* that emphasised constant movement and arpeggiation at the expense of chordal harmony. From this, the foundations were laid for a style of playing that became standardised in later forms of *son montuno* and salsa. Features such as constant syncopation, staggered anticipation, sporadic chordal harmony and the emergence of octave counter-melodies from within an arpeggiated ostinato were much more consistently present during this period, and specific rhythmic relationships, such as that between octave counter-melody and *clave* were established and consolidated. In particular, the use of right hand octave doubling around the dominant (inherited from the *tres*) and sporadic off-beat chords (also found in *danzón*) became formalised in an established rhythmic structure.

There was still a great deal of variety the *montunos* both between and within songs. The sectional structure of the *guarachero* style encouraged variation and experimentation, while the absence of guitar and, especially *tres,* gave pianists greater freedom within the *tumbao.* The earlier influence of jazz bands was still present in the use of vamp and more static *montunos,* though these were rarer than in the earlier part of the decade. Developments such as the *diablo* section and *picao* in the *sonero* style of Arsenio Rodríguez made a further impact, though *guaracheros* retained a rhythmically less complex *tumbao.* It was the *guarachero* piano *montuno* style that would remain dominant and be the greatest influence on later manifestations of *son montuno.*

6.3 *Soneros*

By 1948 there were two *conjuntos* considered part of the *sonero* style: that of Arsenio Rodríguez himself and Los Astros, formed that year by singer René Alvarez, who had already worked with Arsenio (Orovio 2004:12, Leymarie 2002: 127). Both groups retained *tres* and guitar, and played a repertoire of *son montuno* and *guaguancó,* with their slower tempi and more complex rhythmic phrasing.

As we saw in Chapter 5, in many of Arsenio's early recordings both *tres* and piano followed the melodic outline of the *coro*; the piano would play a more chordal line with the right hand while the left hand doubled the bass. Moreover, bass, *tres* and piano, and often *coro* would be following the same rhythmic outline (though not strictly, and with variation). Elements that were common in *guarachero* recordings, such as staggered anticipation, constant syncopation, and pedal notes, were less in evidence in Arsenio's earlier recordings, and although there were instances of counter-melodic piano playing, this was for specific effects, such as the descending chromatic counter-melody in *Quién Será mi Amor* (Ex 5.21) rather than as an integral part of the *tumbao.*

In the later part of the decade, and with another group interpreting this style of playing, there was continued experimentation as well as a greater variety within the style. The development of Arsenio's *diablo* section represented a new approach to structuring songs with a less sectional outline than the *guaracheros,* and this required a more consistent piano *montuno.* There was also a great deal of mutual influence between *guaracheros* and *soneros.* Roberto Espí of Conjunto Casino described the general ambience of the 1940s and 50s thus:

> 'There were many, some following Sonora's style, others following Chappontín and Arsenio but nobody was merely imitating. Each one inclined, as is logical, to follow those who were outstanding' (Mendez/ Pérez 1992: 52)[68]

For the researcher, there are problems associated with the *sonero* recordings of this period. With the guitar, piano and *tres* playing in a similar mid range, and with the limitations of 1940s recording technology, the piano part is often inaudible for much of a song, making transcription extremely difficult. The recordings of Arsenio Rodríguez pose a particular problem, noted also by García, who omits the piano from the majority of his transcriptions of Arsenio's *songs*: *Mi China me Botó, El Reloj de Pastora, Soy El Terror* show just the *tres* line; *No Toque el Guao* and *Yo no Engaño las Mujeres* show just the piano line without the *tres*; only *Camina a Trabajá, Que Cosas Tendrán las Mujeres, Dame un Cachito* and *Kila, Kike y Chocolate* show both parts (García 2003: 145-150, 183-189).

In this section I use three methods to examine the *sonero* style: the first is to examine the piano *montunos* in the García transcriptions of Arsenio Rodríguez that feature both piano and *tres*; the second is to compare Arsenio's original recordings with my own recordings of contemporary *conjuntos* that follow his style; and the third is to examine the recordings of Los Astros, the other *sonero* group of

[68] Habían muchos, unos siguiendo el estilo de la Sonora, otros siguiendo a Chappottín y a Arsenio; pero nunca imitando. Cada cual se inclinaba, como es lógico, por seguir aquellos que se habían destacado.

the period, in which, due to stylistic features, the individual parts are easier to hear and transcribe. In this way I build up a picture of a style that was in transition between a near-unison *tres*/piano combination and a more complex shared interlocking *tumbao*.

The *sonero* style of Arsenio Rodríguez

The development of *contratiempo* by Arsenio Rodríguez in the second half of the 1940s represented a further sophistication of the existing melodic and rhythmic relationships between the tuned instruments of the *tumbao* - bass, *tres* and piano - and of their relationship to both the *clave* rhythm and to the *son montuno* dance steps. With a more independent bass line, neither necessarily conforming to conventional bass lines (such as bolero or anticipated bass) nor automatically following the rhythmic outline of *tres*, piano or *coro*, a new type of *tumbao* emerged, in which *tres* and piano likewise could have more independent and varied roles. The *tres* in particular had a much more rhythmically relentless part, often in nearly constant quaver repetition or in the distinctive *tres* ostinato of *guaguancó,* and it was the *tresero* who took the lead.

According to Efraín Ríos, a contemporary *tres* player, specialising in *son montuno,* the *tresero* was:

> 'the one who drove, the guide, the one who was in charge, holding the group together..... The piano in Arsenio's *conjunto* is in second place, after the *tres*' (quoted in Mendez/ Pérez 1992: 98) [69]

García maintains that, unlike the *guarachero* piano *montunos*, which provided a more general rhythmic/harmonic support, the piano *montunos* in Arsenio's *conjunto* were essentially melodic. Like the *guaracheros*, they stressed the off-beats, but following, or moving in and out of the melodic outline of the *coro* (García 2003: 151). Harmonic reinforcement was less important than melodic (and sometimes counter-melodic) playing and the piano *montunos* feature less arpeggiation and sporadic chordal playing and a greater emphasis on melodic or rhythmic doubling of *coro,* bass or *tres*. As I show later in this section, this more melodic type of piano *montuno* was also a strong feature of the other *sonero conjunto* of the period, Los Astros.

Rubén Gonzalez, who played in briefly in Arsenio's *conjunto* in 1945 describes the *tres*/piano/guitar relationship thus:

> 'The piano was the accompaniment. You can hear the piano now because it's amplified, electronically, but not in those days, and the piano is an instrument with a gentle sound ....In the *conjunto*, the piano and the *tres* complemented each other. I did the accompaniment and he, then, was doing the same ostinato, maintaining the rhythm. The guitar was doing what you would now call strumming; he wouldn't move from that because that was what gave the *conjunto* its sound, the movement thing. So the *tres* plucked, the guitar played a chord and the piano decorated over the top. When we got to the *montuno* the piano also was part of the *tumbao* as it is in salsa, over which the singer was singing. The *tres* did the same. Sometimes we played the same thing in unison. On occasions we made counterpoint' (quoted in Mendez/ Pérez 1992: 79)[70]

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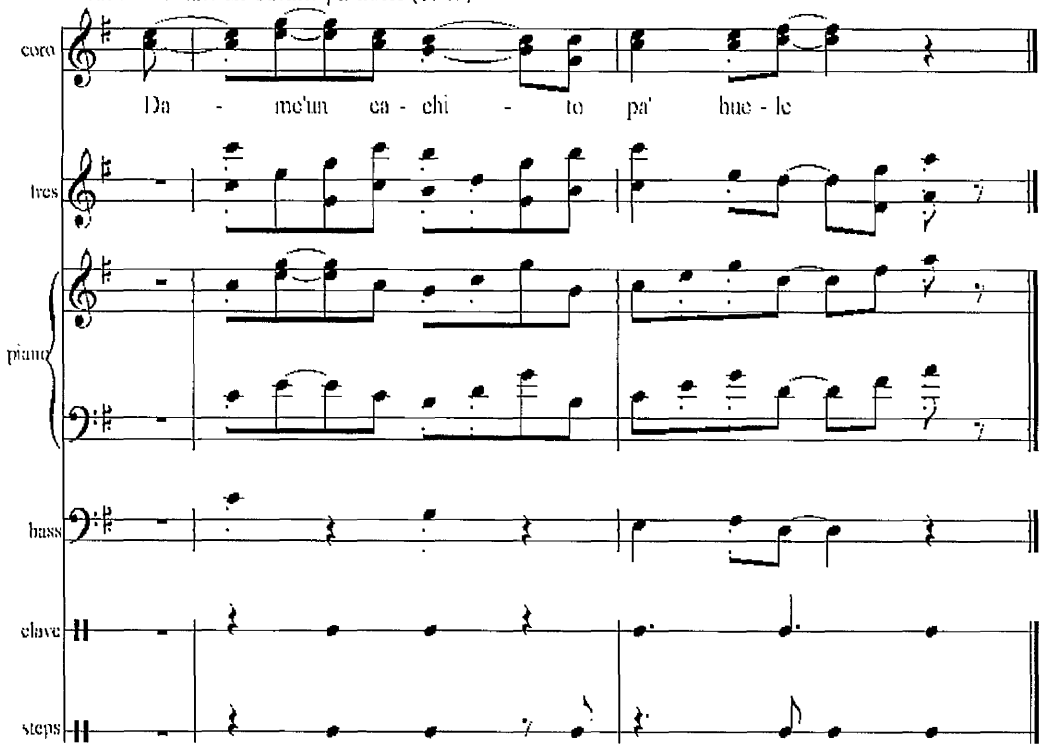
[69] El que conducía, el guía, el que iba ordenando, aglutinando todo el grupo.... El piano del *conjunto* de Arsenio Rodríguez tiene un segundo lugar, después del *tres*.

[70] El piano era acompañante. El piano se escucha porque tiene amplificación, ya es electrónico, en aquel momento no, y el piano es un instrumento de sonoridad blanda. ...En el *conjunto* el piano y el

García's three transcriptions that include both *tres* and piano - *Dame un Cachito pa' Huele* (1946), *Qué Cosas Tendrán las Mujeres* (1949) and *Kila, Kike y Chocolate* (1950) - suggest that during this period there was a progression from the *tres*/piano partial or whole duplication of the *coro* melody in his earlier works (such as *A Buscar Camarón*, quoted in the previous chapter) to a more interlocking ostinato, shared between the tuned instruments of the *tumbao*: *tres*, piano and bass.

In *Dame un Cachito* (Ex 6.32, García 2003:185-186) *tres* and piano are rhythmically and melodically near-identical in a straightforward arpeggiated *montuno*, with one moment of divergence: the isolated, offbeat chord from the piano in the first bar that coincides rhythmically with the *coro* line. *Tres*, piano, bass (and trumpets) all duplicate rhythmically the '*pa' huele*' of the *coro*, which coincides with the *bombo* note.

Ex 6.32 Dame un Cachito pa' huele (1946)



By 1949, a greater independence was clearly developing between *tres* and piano in songs such as *Qué Cosas Tendrán Las Mujeres*. In García's transcription (Ex 6.33, García 2003: 150) the *tres* follows the *coro* line for the first bar but diverges from it, remaining off-beat throughout the second

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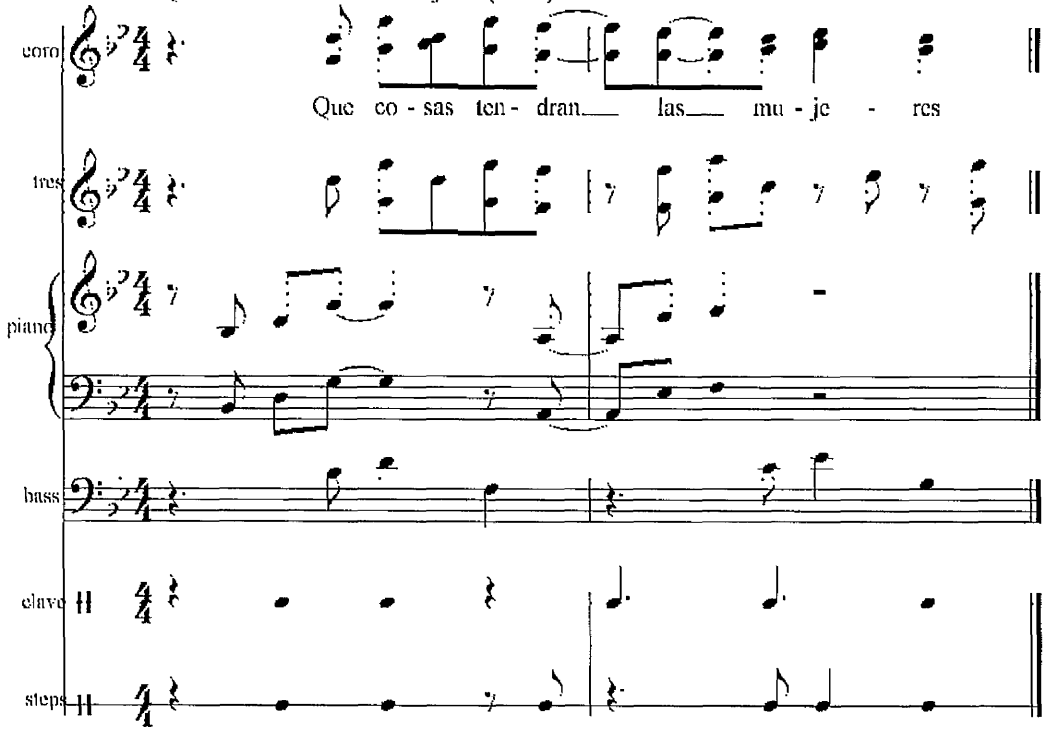
tres complementaban. Yo hacía el accompañamiento y el entonces iba hacienda una misma célula, mantiendo el ritmo. La guitarra iba hacienda lo que ahora le dicen rallar; no se movía de ahí porque era la que le daba al *conjunto* al *son*, la cosa esa de marcha. Entonces el *tres* punteaba, la guitarra hacía el acorde; y el piano sobre eso adornaba. ... Cuando llegábamos al *montuno* el piano también contribuía a hacer un *tumbao*, como hace en salsa, sobre lo que estaba cantando el cantante. El *tres* hacía lo mismo. A veces hacíamos la misma cosa, al unísono. En occasiones hacíamos contrapunto.

bar; meanwhile the piano provides a counter rhythm to *tres*, *coro* and bass, based around rising arpeggiated chords that pre-empt the *coro* and *tres* melody. Meanwhile the rhythm of the dance steps takes on a greater importance in the bass line.

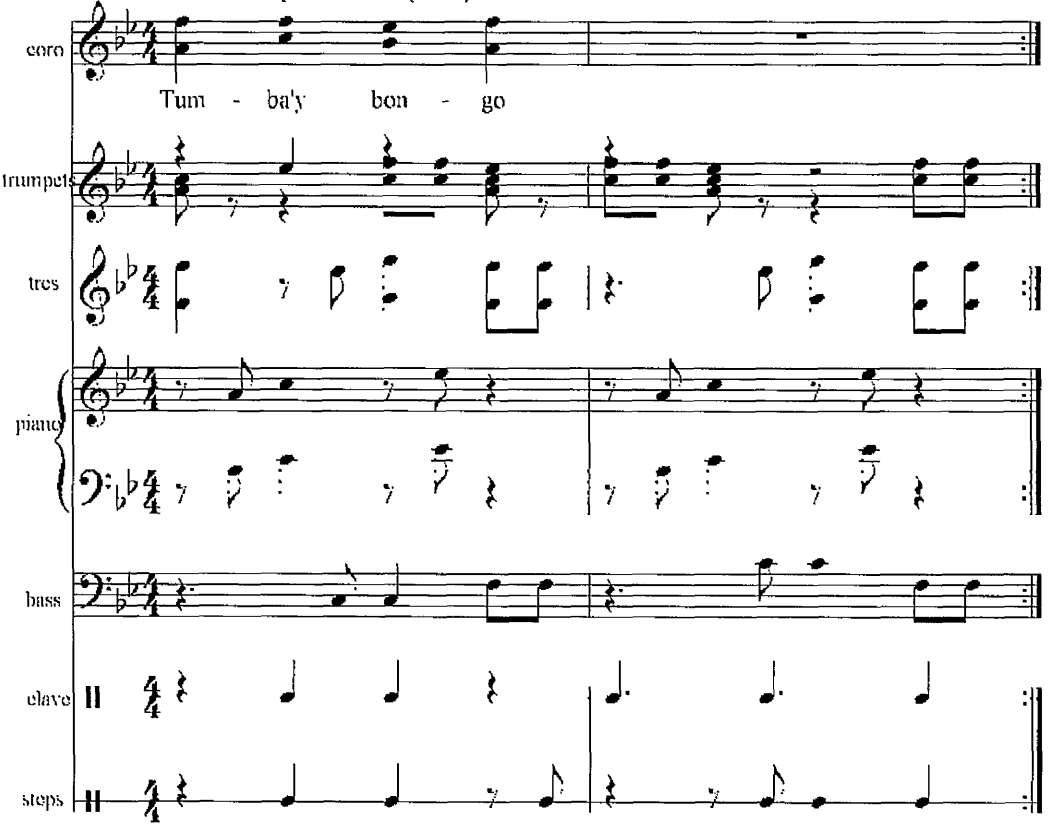
Apart from the first quaver of each bar, every quaver beat is covered by piano, *tres* or bass, or combinations thereof, within their shared interlocking *tumbao*. This presents a far more complex rhythmic framework than, for example, the two Gloria Matancera examples *(El Cepilador* 6.11, *La Comadre Dorotea*, 6.12) in which a similar effect is achieved by a simple on-beat bass and off-beat piano. The piano *montuno* here is, by necessity, less dense; the constant movement of the *guarachero* piano *montuno* is replaced by a more selective accentuation, within a more complex shared structure.

Ex 6.33 Que Cosas Tendran las Mujeres (1949)



In García's third transcription, from the *diablo* section of *Kila, Kike y Chocolate* (Ex 6.34, García 2003: 188) this shared rhythmic and melodic ostinato is extended to include the trumpets, resulting in a hocket effect between trumpets, piano, *tres* and bass. The piano *montuno* here is even more minimalist, picking out just three quavers in each bar and the *tumbao* as a whole has a more indirect relationship with the *coro*.

Ex 6.34 Kila. Kike y Chocolate (1950)



To what extent there was a general move to greater independence between *tres* and piano in Arsenio's recordings during the second half of the 1940s, from Rubén Gonzalez's combination of unison playing and 'occasional' counterpoint to the more consistent interlocking texture shown in *Que Cosas* and *Kila,* is difficult to say. In the case of *Kila*, the complex rhythmic counterpoint is limited to the *diablo* section, in which the playing of the *bongosero* Papa Kila is, in effect, imitated by the rest of the group. I suggest that the type of *tres*/piano independence found here, while becoming more of a feature towards the end of the decade, was confined to the more contrapuntal *diablo* section, and that *tres*/piano doubling (whether whole or partial) remained habitual within the *montuno* section as a whole.

Contemporary recordings of Arsenio's style

My second method has been to transcribe *tres*, piano and bass lines from my own recordings of two contemporary groups who consciously continue Arsenio's *son montuno* style, and to compare these transcriptions with what can be heard in the original recordings. The contemporary groups are: Las Estrellas de Chappottín, who, under the direction of trumpeter Felix Chappottín, continued Arsenio's style after his departure for the United States, and are still performing, albeit with a changed personnel; and Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez, under the direction of Rolando Avila, a cousin of Arsenio, who likewise recreate Arsenio's distinctive sound. (I will use the title Conjunto Avila from now on to distinguish it from Arsenio's). I recorded *tres*, piano and bass together and separately in order to be

able to transcribe the individual lines and hear what is barely audible, especially with regard to the piano part, in Arsenio's original recordings.

Both sets of musicians[71] assured me that they played from written parts, including the piano *montunos*, though without knowing for certain what was played by Arsenio's pianist Lilí Martínez in the originals or how these were passed on to subsequent pianists, it is impossible to know to what extent a *montuno* is being faithfully reproduced. Conjunto Avila's *tresero,* Teorani Lamego Hierregado, explained that some parts were originals and some arranged to recreate the *sonoridad* of Arsenio, though he could not specify which (Interview 27.4.06). The Estrellas would seem to have a greater likelihood of preserving the style more consistently, particularly as Lilí Martínez stayed with the group until 1967 but, as we shall see, this is not necessarily the case (Martínez 1993: 221). Moreover, as I have already noted, even a written *montuno* is a point of departure rather than a fixed entity and just as it is not meant to be repeated without variation, subsequent pianists would not necessarily think it important to preserve it exactly. And, as with the *changüí* transcriptions in Chapter 2, in which I used contemporary recordings of *changüí* to illustrate features of early (unrecorded) forms of *son montuno*, the interest lies in how the *montunos* are constructed, whether they are essentially melodic or harmonic, arpeggiated or chordal, and in the rhythmic relationships between different parts.

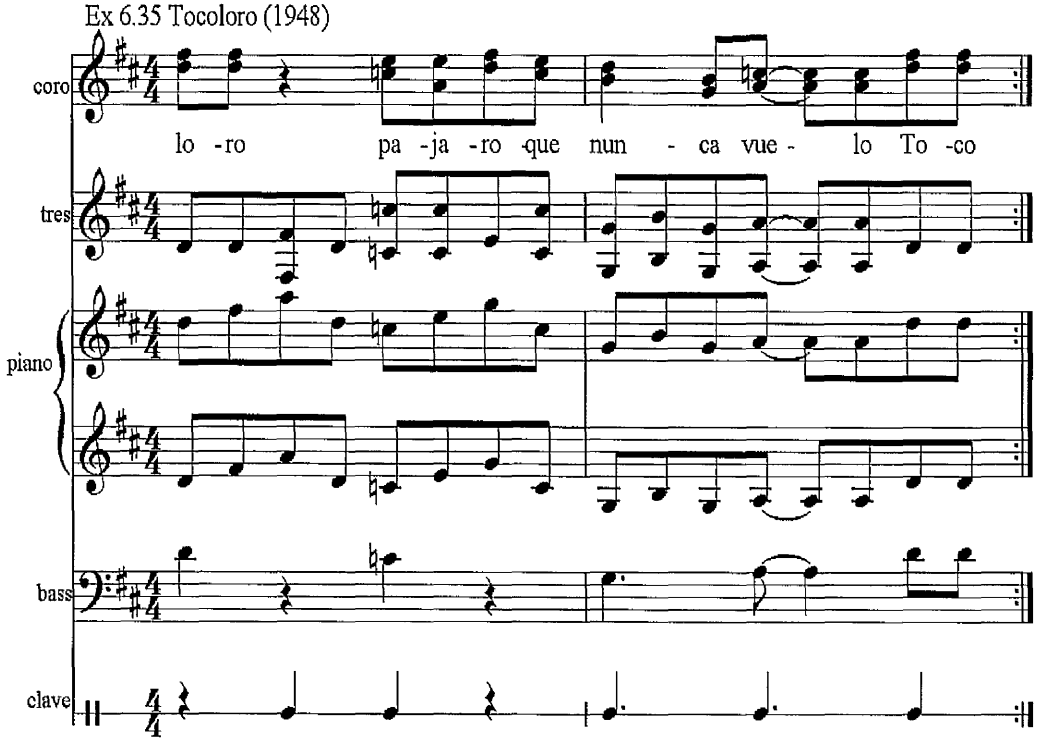
In comparing the original recordings with the two contemporary groups' versions, it is clear that while in some songs the three instrumental lines (bass, *tres* and piano) have remained fairly consistent, in others there have been changes in both rhythmic emphasis and feel. In the originals, the *tres* continues its role of combining melodic reinforcement with constant movement and, of the three instruments it has been the most consistently reproduced. The bass line is less consistent; in the originals it shows a greater use of *contratiempo*, particularly in sounding the beats of the *son montuno* dance steps, while the contemporary groups show a much greater reliance on the classic anticipated bass.

Given that it is the most difficult part to hear, it is not always possible to know how the piano *montuno* is constructed in the original recordings. However, even without being able to hear the piano *montuno* exactly, it is sometimes possible to get a sense of the general outline in order to make a comparison and, as with the bass line there do seem to be clear differences between the originals and the contemporary recordings.

In my first example, *Tocoloro* (Ex 6.35, CD3:14, 0'08'') the piano *montuno* comes through quite clearly in the original recording (1948); it is therefore a good starting point to compare the originals with a contemporary version. The piano *montuno* follows closely the rhythmic and melodic outline of the *tres*, as, to a lesser extent, does the bass. Although it is based around arpeggiation in the first half, the piano *montuno*, like the *tres* is essentially melodic and both move in and out of the *coro* line. *Tres*, piano and bass follow an unsyncopated rhythm, with the *bombo* note being the only moment of syncopation, and as the first beat of the bar is sounded by all three instruments, there is no anticipation.

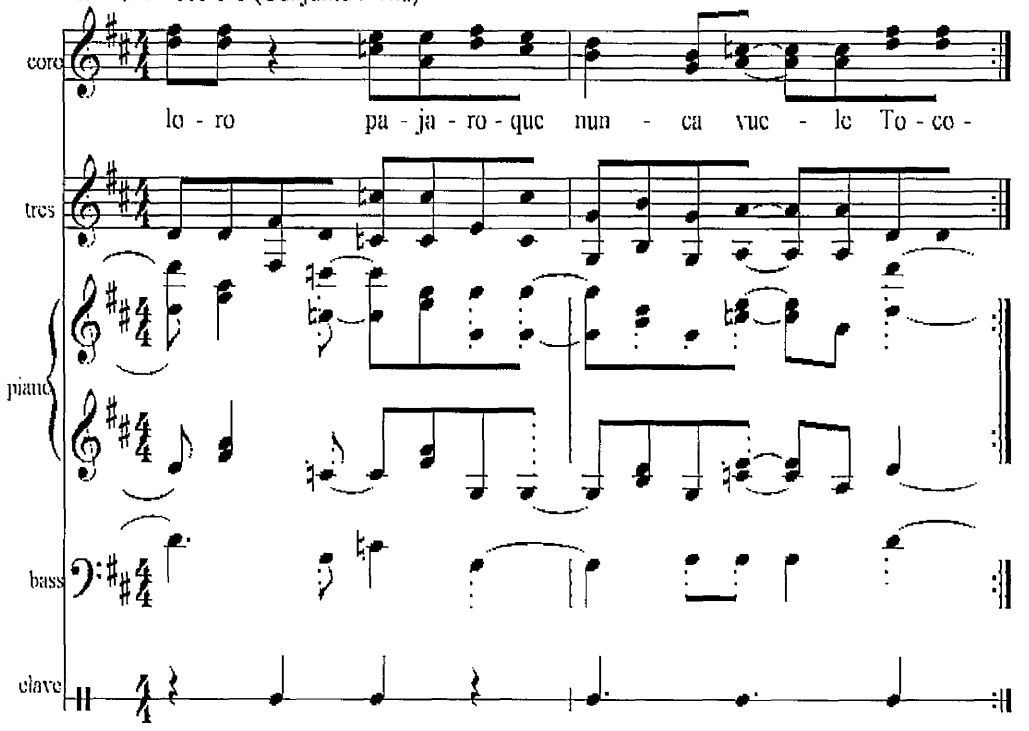
[71] For Estrellas de Chappotín: Angel Laborí Hernandez, piano; Eduardo Cana Oliva, *tres*; Armando Silega Fuente, bass. For Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez (Conjunto Avila): Pedro Martínez, piano; Teorani Lamegon Hierregado, *tres*; José Montero, bass.

Ex 6.35 Tocoloro (1948)



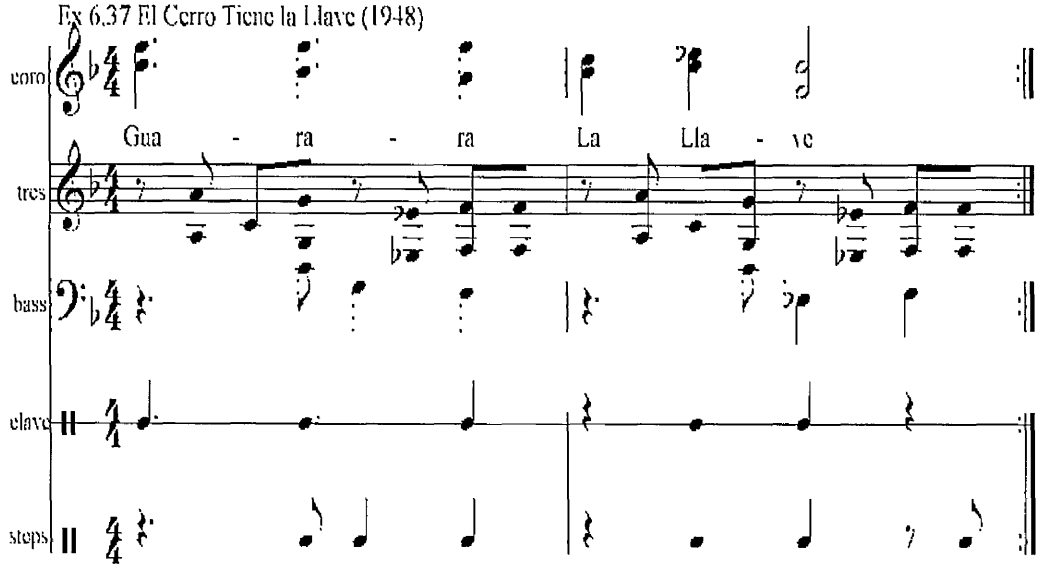
The *tres montuno* in the Conjunto Avila version (Ex 6.36) is identical Arsenio's recording, and the bass follows a similar outline, but anticipates rhythmically at the end of both bars. The biggest divergence between the two versions lies in Avila's more syncopated *guarachero* style piano *montuno,* which is based around arpeggiation, octave and chordal reinforcement and staggered anticipation with the bass. With both bassist and pianist using the rhythmic structures established by the *guaracheros*, and continued in more recent *son montuno* and salsa, this gives the *tumbao* overall a very different feel. Nevertheless, the piano *montuno* remains essentially melodic, with piano, bass and *tres* following the melodic outline of the *coro* and in this it is closer to the *sonero* style.

Ex 6.36 Tocoloro (Conjunto Avila)



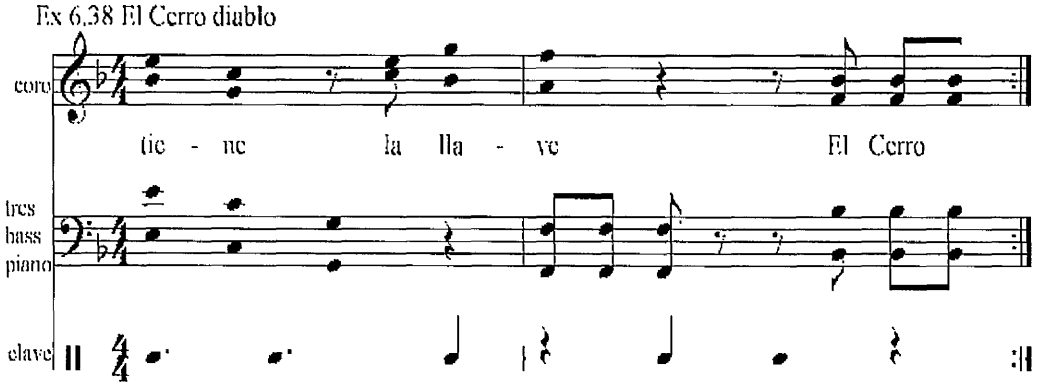
In *El Cerro Tiene la Llave*, a similar process appears to have taken place, with the piano *montuno* in the contemporary versions having a *guarachero* rhythmic structure but still remaining close melodically to the *tres* line. In Arsenio's original version of this *guaguancó* (Ex 6.37, CD3:15, 1'37'') there is constant anticipation, with the *tres* playing its characteristic rhythm (see Ex 6.4). The *tresero* never sounds the first beat and the bassist likewise avoids it, repeating the rhythm taken from the first part of the dance steps. The piano can be heard substituting the *tres* line during the *tres* solo and is clearly heard doubling the *tres* during a short instrumental passage leading into the *montuno* section, suggesting that it may be doubled throughout.

Ex 6.37 El Cerro Tiene la Llave (1948)



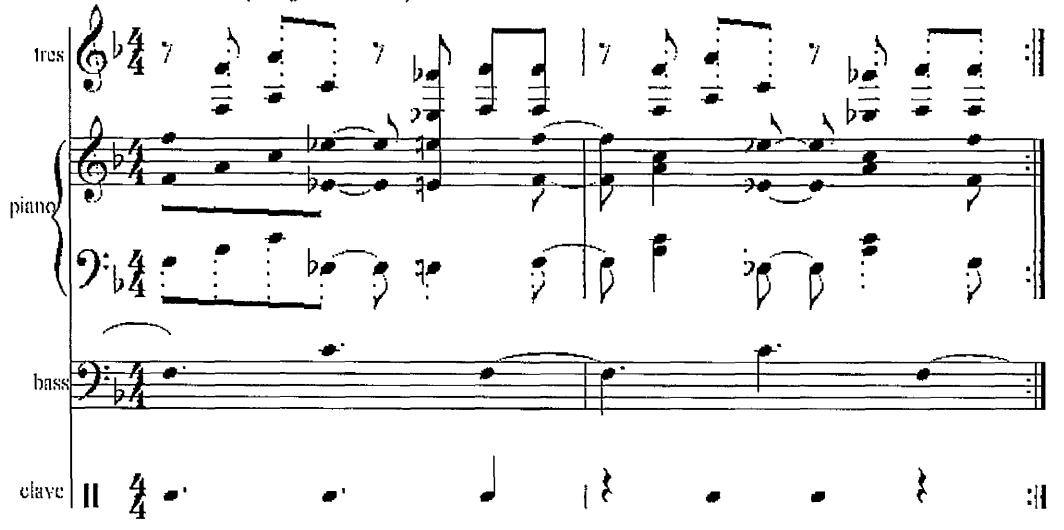
In the *diablo* section (Ex 6.38, 2'49'') the piano *montuno* is clearly in unison with bass and *tres* in a fragmented melodic ostinato that moves in and out of the *coro* line.

Ex 6.38 El Cerro diablo

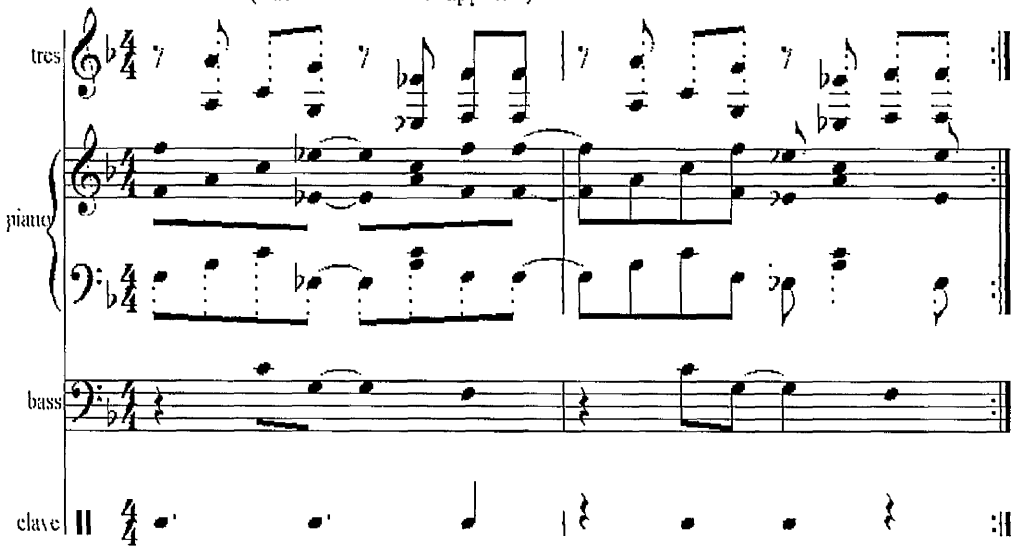


As with *Tocoloro*, the *tres* and bass lines of the contemporary recordings of *El Cerro Tiene La Llave* are fairly accurately rendered by both contemporary groups, with Estrellas in particular using the original *tres* line and a very similar bass, while the *Conjunto* Avila inverts part of the *tres* line and uses an anticipated bass. The piano *montunos* however are very different and are again in a very much more *guarachero* style. They are astonishingly similar to each other, with only minor differences such as the addition of a chromatic E natural passing note in the Avila version. The rhythmic outline, and the use of octave and chordal reinforcement, is the key to this consistency; however, this follows the standard *guarachero* (and later salsa) placing for a 2:3 *clave*, while the *clave* here is 3:2, suggesting that it has not been carefully thought out. Although the *montunos* are more counter-melodic than in *Tocoloro*, in both cases this internal melody is built from the Eb/F alternation in the *tres montuno*, thus maintaining the melodic similarity between them.

Ex 6.39 El Cerro (Conjunto Avila)

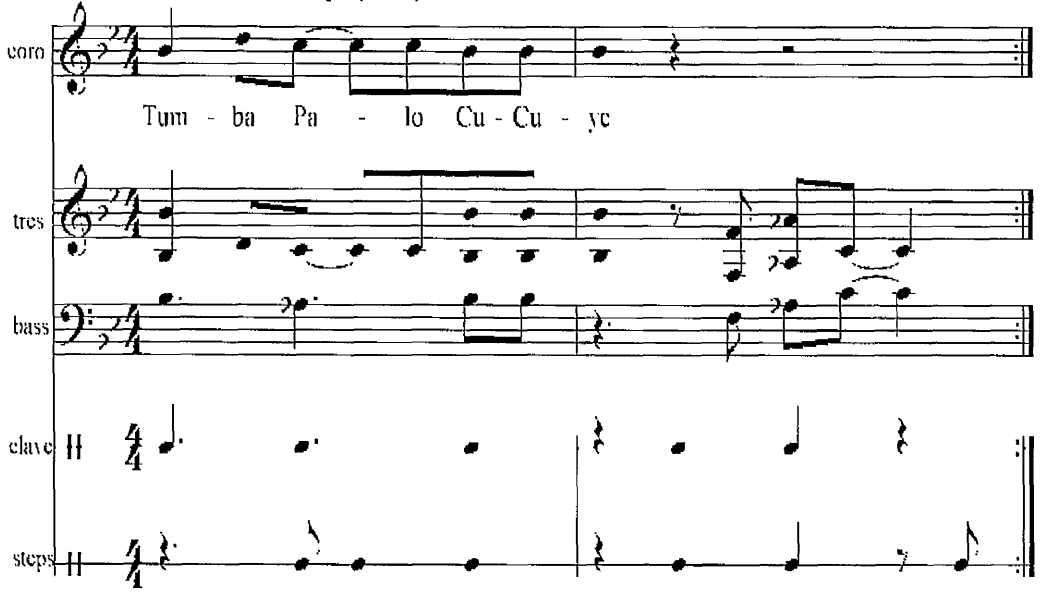


Ex 6.40 El Cerro (Las Estrellas de Chappottin)



For the *son afro, Tumba Palo Cucuye* (1948) I have transcribed the *coro*, bass and *tres* from the original but the piano *montuno* remains inaudible. The *tres* follows the melody closely, with an arpeggiated reinforcement of the harmony at the end of the phrase, in a style reminiscent of the 1920s sextets. The bass line follows the same rhythmic outline, joining the *tres* in unison on the two side of the *clave* (Ex 6.41, CD3:16, 0'05'').

Ex 6.41 Tumba Palo Cucuye (1948)

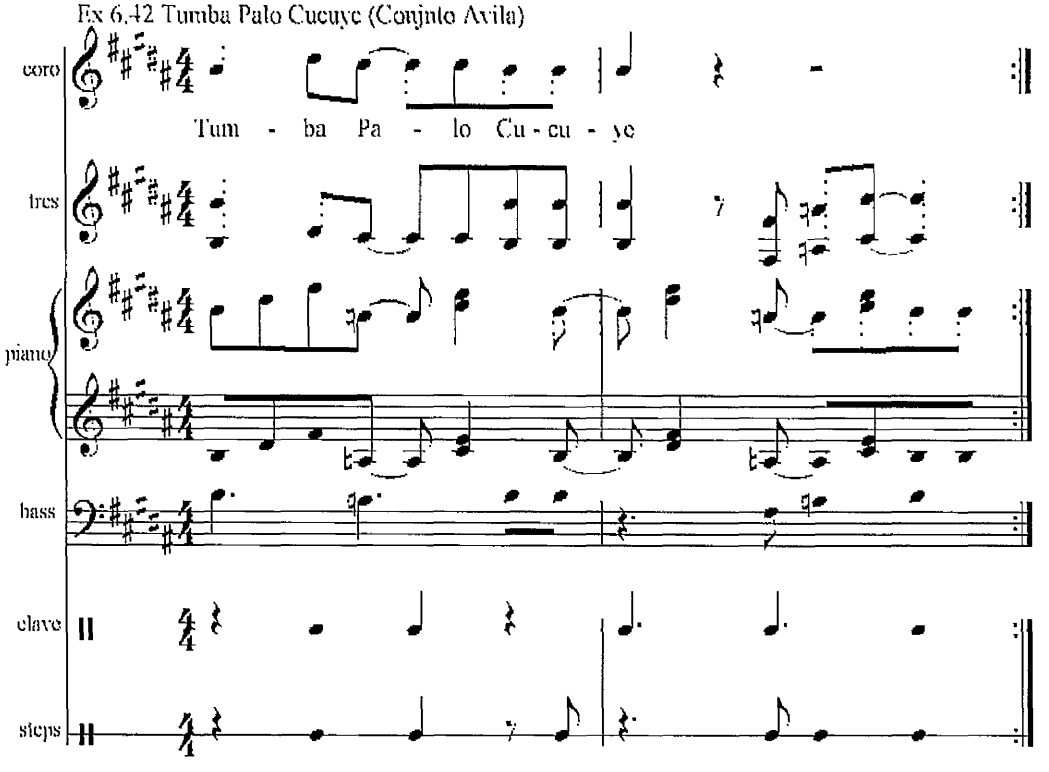


The Conjunto Avila and Estrellas de Chappottín versions show variations in both *tres* and bass. The Avila *tres* line is identical to the original, while the Estrellas' is rhythmically more relentless, though still following the outline of the melody. While the Conjunto Avila bass line follows the rhythmic outline of the melody on the three side and the dance steps on the two side, the Estrellas bass line is a more conventional anticipated bass.

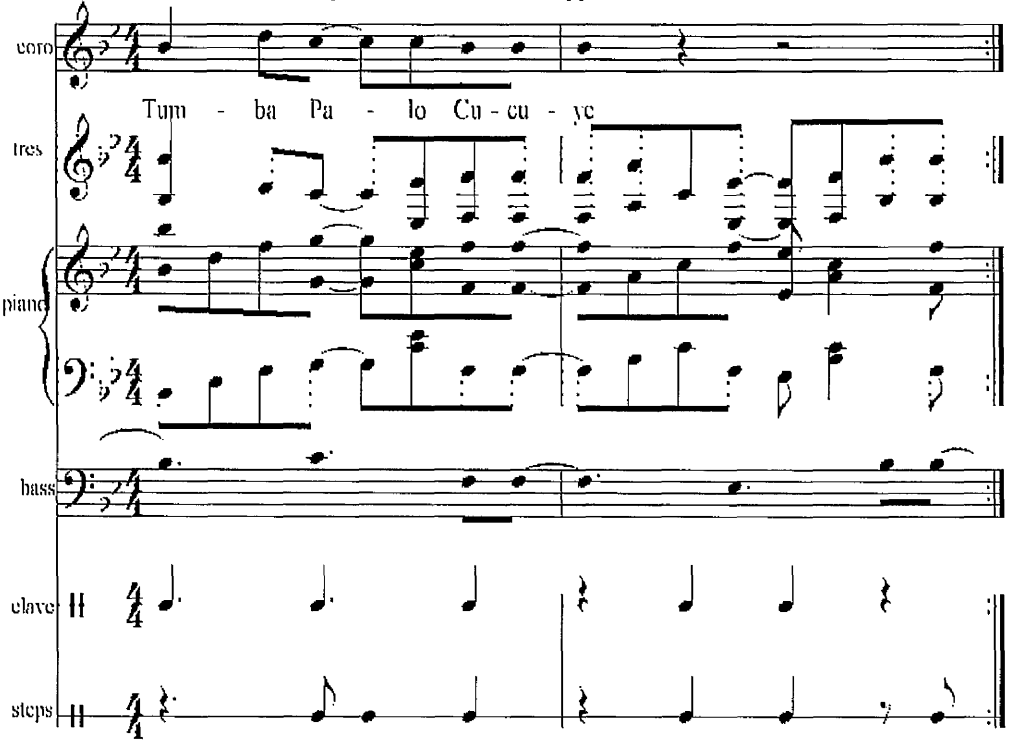
The biggest difference between the *tumbaos* of the two contemporary versions is the harmonic change in the Estrellas version, from a *tumbao* based on the alternation of a major tonic and a flattened seventh to a straightforward tonic, subdominant, dominant progression, different from the original and far less in keeping with the *afro* style, which frequently features flattened sevenths both melodically and harmonically. This difference in harmonic progression means that the Estrellas piano *montuno* can be discounted as a reproduction of the original.

Both contemporary versions have a similar rhythmic interlocking between piano and *tres*. However, as with *El Cerro*, the use of an established 2:3 rhythmic structure, in spite of the 3:2 *clave* (though Conjunto Avila reverse the *clave*) and the placing of chordal (and in the Estrellas version octave) reinforcement, the piano *montunos* more closely resemble the type of arpeggiated and counter-melodic *montunos* of the *guaracheros*.

Ex 6.42 Tumba Palo Cucuye (Conjnto Avila)



Ex 6.43 Tumba Palo Cucuye (Las Estrellas de Chappottin)



It is clear from this small sample of recordings that relying on contemporary renditions of *conjunto son montuno* can be problematic. While the *tres* line seems to have been fairly faithfully rendered in most cases, perhaps due to its relative importance as a signifier of the *sonero* style, both bass and piano bear less resemblance to what can be heard, albeit imperfectly, on the recordings. The anticipated bass was not an automatic feature of either *sonero* or *guarachero* style *son montuno* in the 1940s but in the intervening years has become one of the genre's defining features and this would explain its use by the contemporary *conjuntos*.

The piano *montunos* found in the contemporary ensembles likewise suggests the influence of what became the dominant *montuno* style: that of the *guaracheros*. With a more arpeggiated shape, a similar rhythmic outline, and octave and chordal emphasis at the same points in the cycle, they resemble the type of *montuno* I examined in the *guarachero* section of this chapter. They are very different rhythmically from what, in the originals, appear to be fragmented melodic or counter-melodic ostinatos which follow the outline of the *tres* and/or *coro* with little arpeggiation. However, they maintain the practice of following the melodic outline of *tres* and/or *coro*, albeit within a different rhythmic structure, thus retaining a *sonero* distinctiveness.

In recordings by Las Estrellas de Chappotín from later in the 1950s a mixture of piano *montunos* is present: some follow the outline of the *coro* melody in (semi) unison with bass and *tres* such as *Yo si como Candela* or *Me Voy Contigo*, while some present a more *guarachero* structure, rhythmically distinct from bass and *tres* and with sporadic chords and octaves such as *Ay que Canuto* (Antilla 107). This suggests that the influence of the *guarachero* style was already strongly present in the 1950s; it may be that the scores used by the contemporary *sonero* groups date from this period

rather than the original versions.

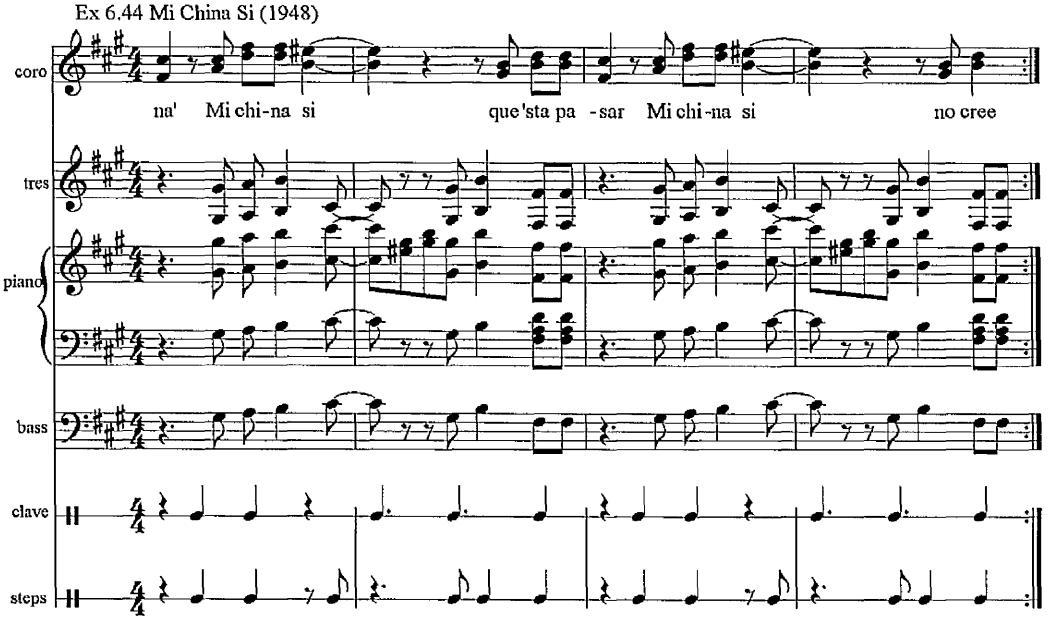
Los Astros

The recordings of the other *sonero conjunto* of the period, Los Astros, can also provide an insight into the *sonero* piano *montuno* during this period. The recordings are considerably clearer, though it is not clear why this should be so. It may be partly due to stylistic features, such as a greater use of unison, in contrast to the interlocking texture of Arsenio's *tumbao*, but might also be a question of microphone positioning or greater attack by pianists. [72]

In the songs recorded between 1948 and 1950, René Alverez and Los Astros maintained a focus on a near-unison *tumbao* for bass, *tres* and piano. While bass and *tres* are more static and completely in unison (at octave), the pianist fills in some extra material at the end of phrases, such as isolated chords or arpeggiated figures, though very sparingly. In most cases, the *tumbao* is providing a counter-melody to the *coro* rather than following its rhythmic or melodic outline.

In *Mi China Sí* (1948) the *tumbao* of bass, *tres* and piano are completely in unison but the pianist adds extra flourishes in the second and fourth bars. There is staggered anticipation but rather than existing between bass (crotchet) and piano/*tres* (quaver) as would be the *guarachero* style, here is between the crotchet of the *coro* and the quaver of the *tumbao* in its entirely, at the end of the first and third bars. The final crotchet of the three side of the *clave*, although representing part of an anacrusis for the vocal line, becomes a *ponche* for the combined *tumbao*, emphasised by the rare use of piano chords. Arsenio's use of *contratiempo*, the stress of off-beats, is here reflected in the complete avoidance of the first beat of the bar by the *tumbao* and the rhythmic concordance between the *tumbao* ostinato and the *son montuno* dance steps (Ex 6.44, CD3:17, 0'42'').

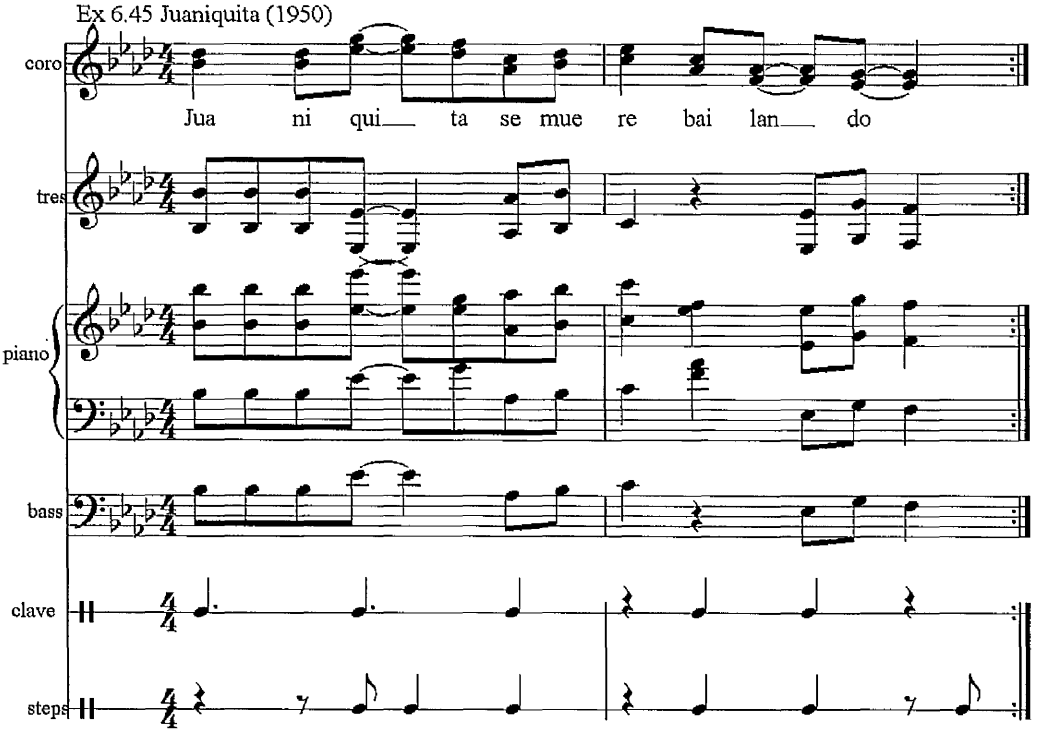
Ex 6.44 Mi China Si (1948)



[72] In these recordings, made 1948-50, the *conjunto* featured four pianists: Carlitos Moore, Silvio Contreras, Rubén Gonzalez and David Palamares. I have been unable to establish who is playing on individual songs. (Tumbao CD062)

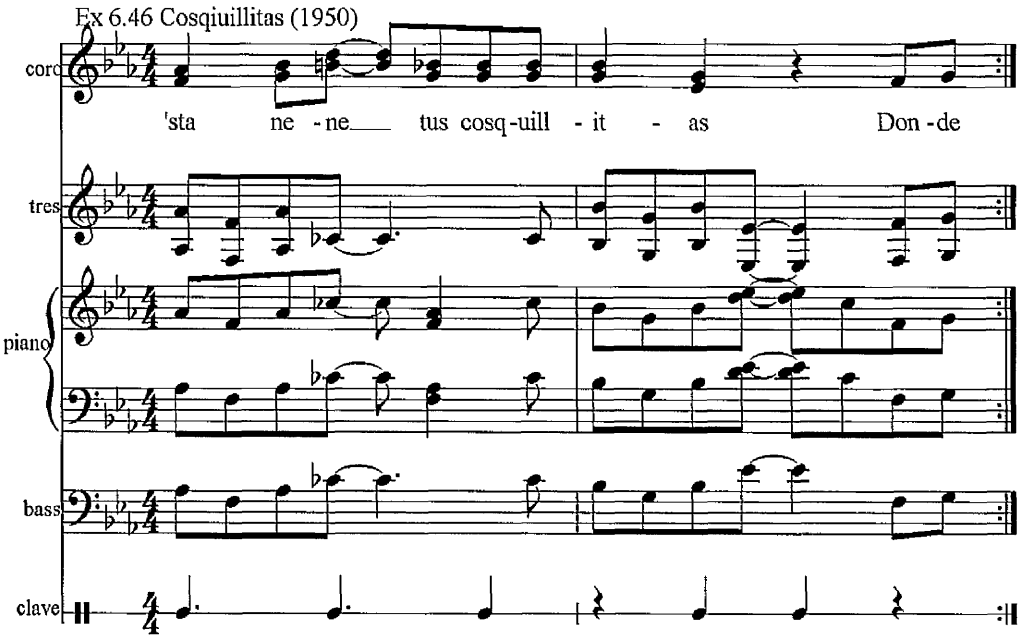
In *Juaniquita* (1950) the unison in the *tumbao* is equally strict with rare instances of piano flourishes, this time within the length of the vocal phrase rather than at the end of it. As with *Mi China Sí*, the piano right hand is firmly established in octaves, suggesting the influence of the *guaracheros,* as the use of octaves is less in evidence in Arsenio's recordings of this period. In contrast to *Mi China Si*, there is no anticipation here, nor *contratiempo*, with just the *bombo* note emphasised by *tumbao* and *coro* (Ex 6.45, CD3:18, 0'16'').

Ex 6.45 Juaniquita (1950)



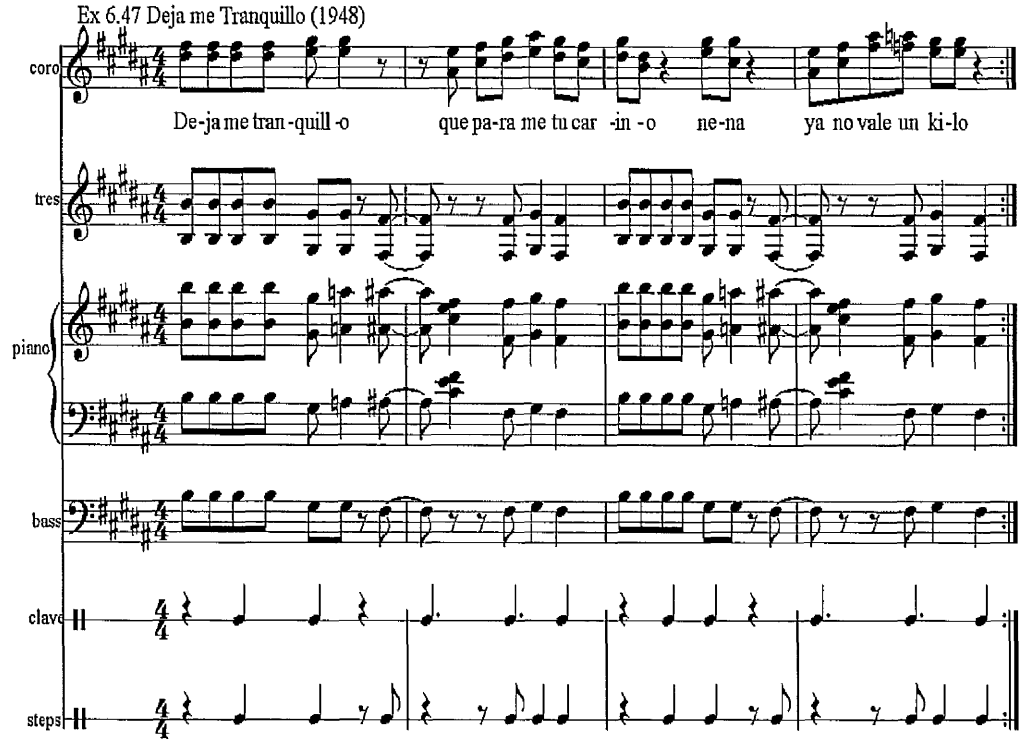
In Ex 6.46, *Cosquillitas* (1950) the unison *tumbao* (with piano again providing rare harmonic reinforcement) diverges from following the *coro* melody in the first half of the phrase to echo its own arpeggiated figure in the second half. In the use of counter-melody and arpeggiation, both piano and *tres* echo the *guarachero* style but this effect is offset by the unison between bass, *tres* and piano (CD3:19, 0'18'').

Ex 6.46 Cosqiuillitas (1950)



In *Deja me Tranquillo*, there is again rhythmic concordance between the instruments of the *tumbao*, but melodic divergence, as the bass and *tres* move down while the piano moves chromatically up (at the end of bars one and three), providing an extra chordal flourish mid phrase. Again the *son montuno* steps are incorporated rhythmically into the *tumbao* (Ex 6.47, CD3:20, 0'15'').

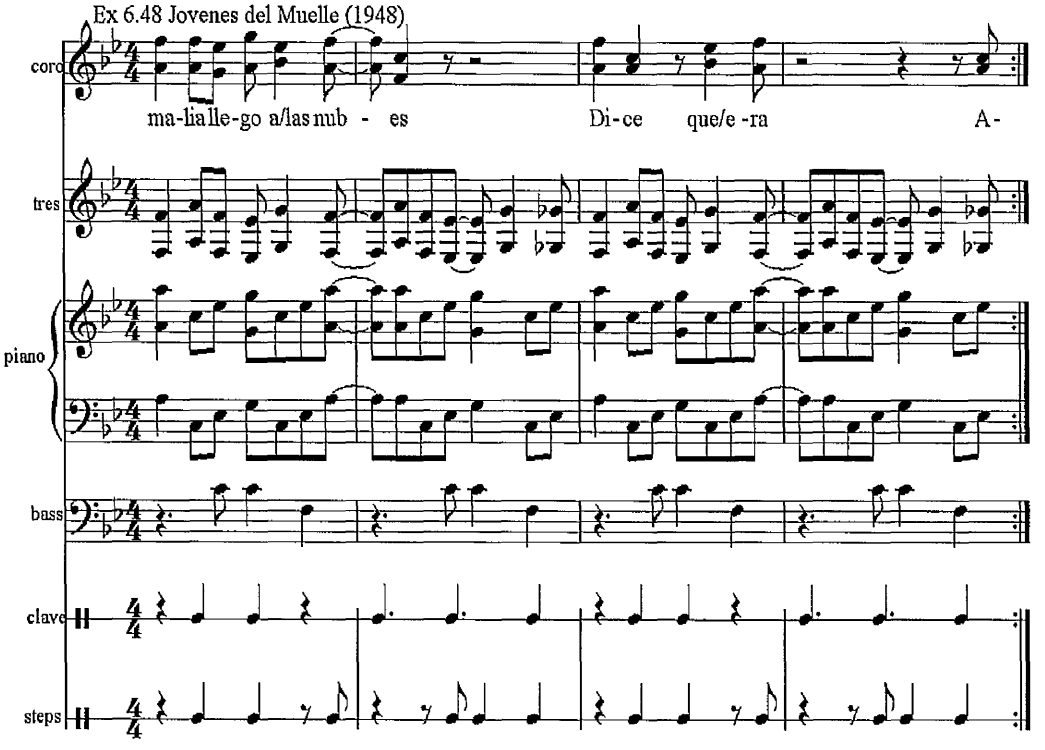
Ex 6.47 Deja me Tranquillo (1948)



As these examples show, the type of constant motion and arpeggiation associated with the *guarachero* style of piano *montuno* is not present. The rhythmic matrix of the *tumbao*, that I examined in Chapter 1, in which a mosaic of interlocking rhythms converge on specific beats, such as the *bombo*, was not at this point fully established in either *guarachero* or *sonero* styles but elements appear in both. Here a unison (or near-unison) ostinato, gives these specific beats prominence. There is still fairly constant movement and the principle of horizontal harmony remains, with a melodic orientation in the ostinato and the very sparing use of chords in the piano. While the chordal reinforcement follows the points in the *clave* that I established for the *guarachero montunos*, octave doubling is not used to accent specific notes, and the right hand is either completely in octaves or not at all.

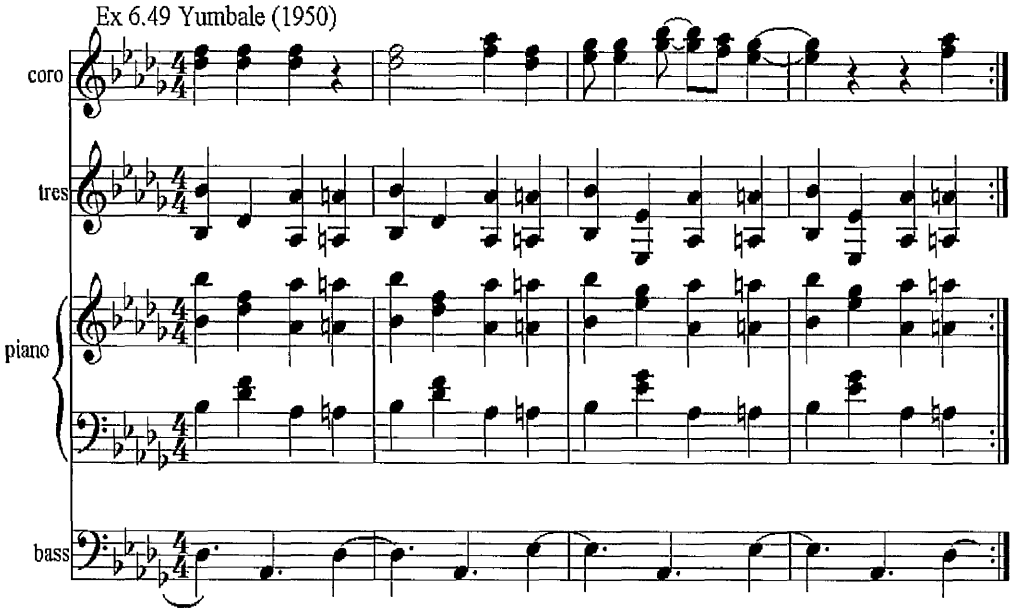
However Los Astros did not concentrate exclusively on this style of playing. In *Jovenes del Meulle* (1948) they show the influence of the *guaracheros* in an arpeggiated piano *montuno*, reminiscent of some of the less syncopated *guarachero* examples. It combines with a melodic *tres montuno* that more closely follows the rhythmic outline of the *coro*. Piano and *tres* are in (near) rhythmic unison but the pianist still fills in extra beats in a more interlocking texture, providing a much greater sense of movement and density. Melodically they move in contrary motion with stressed notes often in thirds and the bass provides a more classic anticipated bass (based on the rhythmic patterns of the *son montuno* steps) leading to staggered anticipation between the bass and the *tres*/piano combination at the end of the two bar of the *clave* (Ex 6.48, CD3: 21, 1'32'').

Ex 6.48 Jovenes del Muelle (1948)

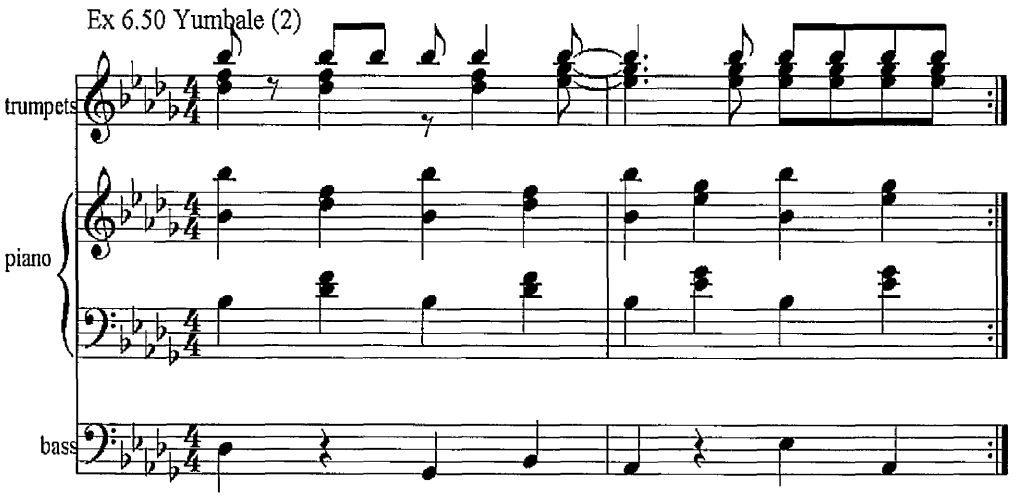


Two examples from *Yumbale* (1950) provides an example of the much more rhythmically static type of piano *montuno*, used (as in the *guarachero* style) to emphasis a pedal note, in this case a sixth note pedal. Although in the first example (heard during the first *coro*/solo call and response) the bass plays the classic anticipated bass, piano and *tres* are rhythmically unison and unsyncopated, and the sixth note pedal is given emphasis by means of a chromatic anacrusis (in both parts) and octave doubling (in the piano *montuno*). As I mentioned before, an emphasis on the pentatonic sixth note was often used to give an African flavour to a song. The lyrics of the vocals in this section are inaudible (Ex 6.49, CD3:22, 2'05'').

Ex 6.49 Yumbale (1950)



The final section of the *song* (Ex 6.50, 1'52'') shows the influence of Arsenio's *diablo* section. The cycle has been halved (*picao*) and the trumpets have a level of counterpoint rarely found in the *guarachero* style. However, the piano *montuno* remains rhythmically static, still emphasising the sixth note pedal, while the bassist rather unexpectedly abandons the anticipated bass to synchronise rhythmically with the piano.



Summary

Sonero conjuntos in the second half of the 1940s continued to provide a stylistic alternative to the dominant *guarachero* interpretation of *son montuno*, for both artistic and commercial reasons. The songs of Los Astros feature a unison, melodic *tumbao*, in which the piano *montuno* is frequently synchronised, melodically and rhythmically with the other members of the rhythm section. In these *montunos*, fragments of the *coro* melody may be present but their overall affect is counter-melodic. However, unlike the *guarachero* piano *montunos*, the counter-melody does not emerge from within a harmonic/rhythmic ostinato but is played in isolation and is given a greater prominence by its multi-instrumental doubling. This approach gives more importance to the piano *montuno* as a part of a shared rhythmic structure than in its role as harmony provider and there is little arpeggiation to confirm the harmonic progression. However, as with the *guarachero* approach, there is an avoidance of chordal harmony and an emphasis on movement and accentuation.

With the problems inherent in transcribing the piano *montunos* of Arsenio Rodríguez during this period, it is more difficult to come to firm conclusions regarding their evolution. The piano *montunos* of Lilí Martínez were in a transitional period between the more static melodic *montunos* of the early 1940s, in which the *tres* line was almost completely duplicated, and the adoption of a more *guarachero* style of *montuno*, heard in some 1950s recordings by Las Estrellas de Chappottín and overwhelmingly used by contemporary *sonero conjuntos*. During this period, piano *montunos* were still essentially melodic, either doubling the *tres* or going into a type of counterpoint in which fragments of the *montuno* were shared between bass, *tres* and piano, as found in *Que Cosas Tendrán las Mujeres*. The example of Los Astros can perhaps give us the best clue as to the prevailing *sonero* style, but this type of *tres*/piano melodic divergence and contrapuntal interlocking are less in evidence in their essentially unison approach to the *tumbao*.

Conclusion

A recognisable piano *montuno* was by 1945 a regular feature of the *conjunto* sound and in spite of the divergence between the two *conjunto* styles, the role of the pianist remained the same:

pianists shared a rhythmic responsibility with other members of the *tumbao* and continued to work within the combined rhythmic structures to provide harmonic support, using movement and accentuation rather than block chords and contributing to a horizontal, continuous harmonic sense.

For *guarachero* pianists this involves an established rhythmic structure in which chordal and, in particular, octave counter-melodic lines are accentuated within an arpeggiated ostinato. Constant anticipation, often staggered with the bass, and moving between functioning as a counter-rhythm to the *clave* and joining it for certain beats, contribute to a relentless energy which gives the piano *montuno* its momentum and drive. These elements, alongside other features, such as dominant or 6^{th} note pedal notes doubled in octaves, which echo *tres* doubling but in a more formalised manner, laid the foundations for developments in later forms of *son montuno* and, beyond Cuba itself, global salsa. While there are still echoes of an earlier *tres montuno* structure, in melodic duplication and the reinforcement of harmony at the end of phrases, *montunos* had become essentially counter-melodic and rhythmic/harmonic.

Here the musical principle of interlocking functions most clearly in the creation of a harmonic sense via constant movement and arpeggiation. While there is sporadic use of chordal harmony, it is restricted to specific moments in the cycle and rarely used more consistently. Shared rhythmic interlocking by all members of the *tumbao* is of course present, and became during this period more dependent on the *clave* as an organising principle. However, with a denser and more relentless *montuno* it is the constant movement and syncopated accentuation within the piano *montuno* itself that provides the music with much of its rhythmic drive.

Sonero pianists followed a different path. Within a more complex rhythmic structure, in which the *son montuno* dance steps are as important as the *clave* rhythm, the *tumbao* often appears as one rhythmic unit, with piano, *tres* and bass doubling a melodic or counter-melodic ostinato that interlocks rhythmically with both *coro* and dance steps. Or, conversely there is a counterpoint between piano, *tres* and bass in which this ostinato is horizontally shared. In this way, specific accentuated beats, rather than emerging from within relentless ostinato, weave in and out of the *coro* line, in the manner of the *tres* in the 1920s. This combined ostinato, whether unison or shared, still provides a harmonic sense but less through movement than through a mix of rhythmically accented melody and counter-melody. This is clearly audible in the songs of Los Astros, strongly influenced by Arsenio's *conjunto*, but the *conjunto* of Arsenio Rodríguez himself, for reasons of audibility, is more difficult to analyse.

The type of internal interlocking practised by the *guaracheros* is less frequently found within the structure of the *sonero* piano *montuno*. Both within a *tumbao* with a shared and duplicated rhythm or within a complex rhythmic interlocking ostinato between piano, *tres*, bass and, increasingly, trumpets, there is less space for a piano *montuno* with a dense interlocking structure of its own. Movement comes less from arpeggiated chords than from a shared, alternated or staggered accentuation. Nevertheless there is still an avoidance of chordal harmony in the *sonero* piano *montuno* and the sense of a horizontal stream of notes providing the harmonic progression continued, even though this overlaps and alternates to a much greater extent with other instruments in the *tumbao*. Imitation of the plucked *tres*, in spite of its continued presence, informs this approach to harmony creation and accompaniment.

I argue that both types of *conjunto* were continuing with an accompaniment structure built around rhythmic and melodic interlocking, in both the shared *tumbao* and within the piano *montuno* itself, but with contrasting emphases. The ensemble interlocking of the *tumbao* had a simpler rhythmic structure in *guarachero s*ongs and much of the driving rhythm had to be supplied by a denser and/or more counter-melodic piano *montuno*. *Sonero tumbaos,* in contrast, had a more complex shared rhythmic structure and, moreover a second interlocking melodic instrument, the *tres*, and thus could afford less activity in the piano *montuno* itself.

It is important to remember, however, that the *conjunto* piano style was still in its early stages even in the second part of the 1940s, and, while there are many glimpses of what would become more established structures in later manifestations of *son montuno*, pianists during this period retained a great deal of flexibility in how to construct their own *montunos*. Individual creativity was highly prized and this is demonstrated in the variety shown in these transcriptions.

Thesis Conclusion

July 2004. I was in the Centro Asturias, in Old Havana, having been invited to watch Las Estrellas de Chappotín rehearse for a forthcoming concert. The rehearsal was in full swing, in spite of the close heat of the afternoon, when a young man, a tourist, wandered into the building, having heard the music from the street. He carried a guitar case and loitered at the door for a long time, clearly hoping to be invited to play a couple of numbers with the band. The musicians continued rehearsing and ignored him, just as professional musicians in Europe or North America would do, though the interruption would not have occurred so easily in their countries, due to the more private nature of rehearsal facilities.

This incident seems to exemplify the way in which Cuban musicians are perceived by the outside world - as spontaneous music makers who sing and dance at the slightest opportunity and are always ready to jam with a passing stranger. It contrasts strongly with the reality of an extremely professional group of people in a country which, more than any other in the region, has both embraced the commercial possibilities of music as a vital part of the economy, above all in the tourist industry, and since the Revolution treated musicians as serious, salaried workers.

The stereotype of spontaneity downplays the professionalism of Cuban musicians and does not correspond to the reality of an industry that, during the period covered by this thesis, was (and has remained) competitive and economically vital, with a huge domestic market. I am stressing this professionalism because the decision to integrate the piano into the *son montuno* ensemble was not taken arbitrarily or by chance. Rather it was the logical decision to incorporate an instrument of some prestige, which was already established in other popular Cuban styles, into a musical genre that had, itself, already developed well beyond its rural origins. This transformation was driven by the commercial and competitive pressures faced by professional musicians, and the radical shift in piano technique that resulted was thus a by-product of a more general desire for musical renewal and novelty.

The context for the *conjunto* piano

This thesis has detailed the emergence of the *conjunto* piano as involving two fundamental changes in the role of the instrument within a popular music ensemble. The first change was the piano becoming part of the shared cyclical ostinato of the *tumbao*, in which the instrument was treated as an equal partner within the interlocking rhythmic structure. The second and more radical change was in the technique of the instrument itself, in that a new approach to playing the piano emerged, based on the avoidance of block harmony in favour of a melodic or counter-melodic stream of notes and giving the aural impression of a harmonic sequence.

The combination of these fundamental changes was what gave the piano *montuno* its distinctive feel and its enduring internal structure. Is has to be seen, however, within the context of other developments in Cuban music with which it overlapped. The inclusion of the piano, as a melodic instrument, in the ensemble interlocking of the rhythm section is not unique to *son montuno*. The extension of Afro-Cuban rhythm principles to melodic (or harmonic) instruments was a feature of other genres, both in Cuba and in the rest of the Caribbean. In 1940s Cuba, this type of experimentation itself often emerged from the influence of *son montuno* and the inclusion of a *montuno* section with its

cyclical rhythmic structures. The innovations in the *charanga* of Arcaño transformed the role of the piano in the *montuno* section of *danzón*, from a loose conglomeration of accompaniment figures to a structured and strictly repeated rhythmic ostinato which locked in with the other members of the rhythm section. Moreover, using a melodic instrument in this way was not confined to the piano: the violins in Arcaño's *charanga* were likewise co-opted into this shared rhythmic ostinato, as were the trumpets in the *diablo* section of Arsenio Rodríguez and the brass in general in the mambo of Pérez Prado.

Beyond this inclusion in shared rhythmic structures, the development of a pianistic approach involving constant movement and arpeggiation is, however, unique to *son montuno* during this period. Like the shared rhythmic interlocking of the ensemble, this internal interlocking can also be linked to African musical principles, both (via the *tres*) in the accompaniment style of plucked chordophones in the West African Sahel region and with the wider application of interlocking between hands or fingers, found on a variety of instrumental groups throughout much of sub-Saharan African. There is therefore a precedent for the interlocking plucked *tres* (and later piano), in both African chordophone techniques and wider interlocking practices, which challenges the commonly held view of Cuban music, and in particular *son montuno*, as a fusion of European strings/melody and African percussion/rhythm.

Both of these elements of interlocking within the piano *montuno* can therefore be seen as part of a wider process of instrumental substitution. It was by the 1940s driven less by the non-availability of the regularly-used instrument (as envisaged by Nketia), than by the commercial pressure to create a bigger and more cosmopolitan sound. In the 1930s and 40s, professional competition between different types of ensemble and the desire to both modernise yet remain distinctive fuelled the wider transformation of instrumental roles.

In creatively fusing the two types of interlocking - ensemble and individual - pianists not only became a key part of the rhythm section but transformed the role of the instrument from being a provider of predominantly chordal support and melodic ornamentation (as it had been in popular genres up until this point) to contributing to the shared interlocking structure using a strongly rhythmic and accented melodic flow. The established technique of independent right and left hands was suspended and replaced by near-identical arpeggiated ostinati, and regular, though varied, repetition took the place of a freer movement between different accompaniment styles. Unlike earlier classical works in which the piano was used to represent Afro-Cuban rhythmic structures within an essentially European idiom, this was a completely new approach to the instrument in which it was an equal partner within the shared rhythmic structure of the *tumbao*.

The context for this research

In this thesis I have examined these two changes, tracing the development of a distinctive *conjunto* piano style and demonstrating that the frequent Cuban classification of musical elements according to African or European provenance is over-simplistic in this context. As a result, my research opens up a number of neglected areas in the field of Cuban popular music.

Firstly, I have extended the literature on this period in Cuban musical history, building on the work of García, Sublette, Moore, Leymarie and Davies to present a picture of the development of the

conjunto piano style. My thesis complements Davies' work on the trumpet in *son montuno* and contributes detailed musical analysis of the role of the piano in the *conjunto* to the study of Cuban musical life during the pre-Revolutionary period.

Secondly, I have broadened the study of African musical structures and approaches to an instrument of European origin, previously excluded from detailed analysis of this type. This echoes the work of Moore and García in relation to brass instruments, both of whom use the terminology of interlocking and hocket to describe brass arrangements during this period. However I have taken this a step further to show that while the piano *montuno* interlocks rhythmically with other members of the *tumbao*, it also contains an internal interlocking structure that foregrounds movement and arpeggiation over chordal harmony. For this reason, the piano makes a fascinating case study of the consequence of applying an interlocking approach to an instrument whose role within the popular music ensemble until this point had been a much looser amalgam of general musical support.

Thirdly, I have extended the theoretical literature on African American music and jazz to a Cuban context, using these insights to look beyond the surface features of Cuban music to deeper structures and approaches and to contest the binary paradigm of cultural origin that has prevailed in much of the literature on Cuban music. In particular I argue that pianists, in becoming part of the shared interlocking structure of the *tumbao*, transformed the nature of the piano in Cuban popular music, creating a new role in which musical content is subservient to the process of performance and in which a looser, more improvisatory approach to playing was as highly valued as technical dexterity.

I have also engaged with Kubik's work on the African origins of the Blues to contest the idea of two poles of influence (loosely Congolese and Mande) in Afro-American music, showing that the social parallels between the United States and eastern Cuba could suggest an alternative environment in which the percussion-based music of other parts of Cuba was less prominent and the *tres*-based *son montuno* emerged. Although I have shown that elements of *tres* technique have parallels with West African chordophone styles, this is not to argue that the *tres* is a recreation of an African musical instrument in the Americas, nor that early forms of *son montuno* can be traced to a specific musical tradition. I argue simply that the accepted view of the *tres*, and by extension the playing technique of *treseros*, as European or of European origin, is simplistic and that there are African precedents for this type of interlocking chordophone style.

Finally, the thesis presents a valuable addition to the literature on salsa and salsa piano. The comparative neglect of the piano in much writing on *son montuno,* combined with the emphasis on playing technique in salsa literature, has meant that contemporary pianists had had little information on the origins and history of salsa piano. I have contributed a detailed historical overview of the emergence of the *conjunto* piano style and an analysis of its essential features, many of which would become strongly established in both subsequent Cuban popular forms and Pan-American salsa.

The most important contribution of this thesis to the discipline of popular musicology has been to assert the importance of a specifically musical and analytical approach to the study of popular music. I have built on the contextual approach outlined by scholars such as Negus and Wade (and applied in a Cuban context by García, Moore, Sublette, Davies and Leymarie), in which issues of social and political context, conflicting audience identities, musical hybridity and performing personalities

take centre stage. To this I have added detailed musical analysis, using transcriptions from commercial recordings from the period to present not just a musical snapshot of a particular moment but the establishment of a musical process that would endure, both in Cuba and beyond. While commercial recordings are often seen as a 'finished product' rather than a glimpse of one performance witnessed live, recording limitations in the 1940s meant that they were likely to be far closer to live performance than those of today. Each recording can be seen as a representation of a live performance, similar to that of radio, with the only difference being the time restrictions of the 78 rpm disc.

Thus, in the type of piano *montuno* chosen for each song, in the gradual development of an established piano *montuno* structure and in the different versions of the *montunos* within each song, we can trace the emergence of an approach to playing that combined strict rhythmic discipline with a high level of variation and spontaneity. In this I am adding to the ethnomusicological work of Arom in his transcription of Central African horn ensembles, both in the examination of how musicians use a basic model or part as a basis for variation and in the transcription of ostinati which are constructed within clear boundaries but constantly varied. Beyond this, I am also contributing to the study of improvisation in general, and my examination of *conjunto* piano solos in particular provide a useful background to Manuel's examination of Latin piano improvisation.

Further research possibilities

During the period 1940-51, the basis for a new Cuban popular piano style was established. Although always closely associated with *son montuno*, its effects were felt in contemporary genres such as *danzón* and Cuban jazz, and its footprint has been found in almost all subsequent Latin styles from *timba* to salsa. The importance of the *conjunto* piano thus transcends its immediate environment to have far reaching musical consequences in Latin America and beyond. The Cuban diaspora to the United States, which nurtured the development of salsa both before and after the Revolution, has been followed by a secondary diaspora of Latin music to the rest of the continent, and subsequently to the rest of the world, spawning new hybrid styles and approaches. It is therefore more important than ever to trace the distinctive and enduring style of piano playing that has become emblematic of salsa and related genres, to its original source.

An obvious area for further research would be the impact of the emergence of the *conjunto* piano on pianists in 1950s Cuba and beyond. It was in this decade that pianists became star performers within all types of ensemble, and figures such as Perdro 'Peruchín' Justo, Dámaso Pérez Prado, Bebo Valdés and Frank Emilo Flyn both extended the *conjunto* piano style in their work with popular dance orchestras and, strongly influenced by jazz, moved away from it in the development of the *descarga* or jam session. With the 1959 Revolution, the development of Cuban music on the island and the emergence of salsa in the United States created a context for parallel but distinct versions of the piano *montuno*, both with roots in the *conjunto* piano but with differing emphases. A comparison between the way that pianists developed the piano *montuno*, with the contrast between the gradual standardisation of the salsa *montuno* and the virtuosity that emerged with *timba* in the 1990s would reveal much about the attitude of both audiences and the musicians themselves.

Another fruitful area for research would be the legacy of the two different types of *conjunto*:

the *guarachero* and *sonero*. The influence of the *guarachero* piano style has perhaps been the more consistent of the two approaches that emerged in the second half of the 1940s. Many of its strongest features have become standard in salsa and, within Cuba, *timba*. The arpeggiated structure of the piano *montuno* with its constant movement, counter-melodic emphasis and the octave and chordal reinforcement of specific points of the cycle have become a standard part of salsa piano practice, and have altered little since the late 1940s. These elements give prominence to the use of interlocking within the structure of the *montuno* itself, but the formalisation of other features, such as the anticipated bass, staggered anticipation between bass and piano and a shared stress on the *bombo* note, has likewise standardised certain structures and relationships within the shared rhythmic interlocking of the *tumbao*. The *guarachero montuno* is thus a more equal mix of the two aspects of interlocking that I have identified as being the genesis of the piano *montuno* and it is perhaps this that has ensured its longevity.

The recent emergence of *reggaetón* as a pan-Caribbean music highlights the need for an integrated approach to the study of the music in the region, an approach that has until now been hampered by the cultural and linguistic legacies of colonialism. Alén has researched the history of the Cuban *tumba francesa* societies with their origins in Haiti, and, drawing on the work of Manuel and Quinto Rivera, I touched upon parallels between Cuba and Puerto Rico. However the presence of interlocking as a musical principle in other parts of the Caribbean, such as in the *banbou* carnival horns of Haiti with their parallels in Central African horn ensembles, could be usefully linked with Cuba and represent potential for further study.

The legacy of the *conjunto* piano

The enduring influence of the *conjunto* piano style reflects its position as a challenge to inherited Western techniques, its role as a symbol of continuity in replacing the *tres* in the *son montuno* ensemble and its adaptability to many branches of Cuban-derived music. It represents a radical change in instrumental technique, resulting from a commercially-prompted instrumental substitution in which pianists incorporated both established Afro-Cuban rhythmic structures and more specific interlocking techniques inherited from the *tres*. In this, the *conjunto* piano contests the binary paradigm of African and European origins, in which musical elements are attributed solely to one source on the basis of instrumental provenance and without an examination of deeper processes. Its importance lies in the challenge to this paradigm, in its fusion of continuity and transformation and in its role as a blueprint for later piano styles.

The emergence of this style in the 1940s underlines the importance of this fertile decade as a crucible for many later musical developments. Commercial and professional pressures were joined by an outburst of concentrated creativity to permanently transform the structures of Cuban popular music and create a strong basis for many subsequent styles, most notably salsa. While pianists themselves were perhaps unaware of the importance of this development, the *conjunto* style they established has become one of the most instantly recognisable and firmly rooted features of pan-Latin popular music. It was during this period that the instrument outgrew its middle class and salon associations (summed up in René Touzet's words that a house without a piano was incomplete), and consolidated its role in the popular arena. In taking their place at the heart of the 'national' music, *conjunto* pianists in the

1940s created a highly distinctive and enduring musical style that remains a dynamic and influential force in the 21st century.

GLOSSARY

Acadamia de Baile
Pre-Revolutionary Dance Academy with live music where men would pay to dance with hostesses. These were an important source of income for lower class musicians and groups.

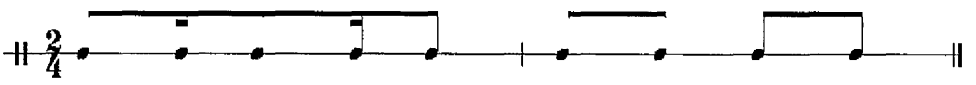
Afro
A genre of popular song, widely popularised by international cabaret artists and jazz bands, from the 1930s onwards, but also a staple of many *conjuntos*. Songs make lyrical and musical reference to Afro-Cuban culture by such means as phrases in African languages, verbal and musical reference to Afro-Cuban religion, and musical, mainly rhythmic, clichés. The *lamento* (slave lament) is a related genre, using many of the same musical clichés, and originally found within the Cuban *zarzuela.*

Afrocubanismo
An elite artistic movement of the 1920s and 1930s in which Afro-Cuban culture was use as raw material and inspiration by mainly white Cuban writers, artists and composers.

Bandurría
A plucked string instrument of Spanish origin, with twelve strings, tuned in pairs, and played with a plectrum. It is used in Cuban *guajira* music.

Banqueato
A rhythmic pattern found in *danzón* and played on the timbales, in which the *cinquillo* rhythm alternates with a bar of regular beats.

Banqueato rhythm



Batá
A double-headed, hourglass-shaped drum, used as part of a set of three in *santería* religious ceremonies.

Bomba
An Afro-Puerto Rican dance genre.

Bombo
i) A bass drum used in Cuban military bands.
ii) The second note of the 'three' side of the *clave* rhythm (see *clave*) and the most strongly emphasised point in the shared rhythmic cycle of *son montuno.*

Bongó
A set of two small drums, held between the knees and played with the fingers and palms. Originally from the Oriente of Cuba and strongly associated with *son montuno.*

Botija
A curved earthenware jug with a mouth at the top and a hole in one side, used as a bass instrument in rural styles of *son montuno.* The player blows in the hole and changes pitch by means of moving the hand over the mouth of the instrument.

Bufo
Comic theatre, popular from the mid 19th century, which could include stock characters, variety and even blackface minstrelsy.

Cabildo
Afro-Cuban mutual aid society and social group, based on the supposed ethnic origin of its members and an important element in the preservation of African cultural practice.

Canto
The first (verse) section of both *rumba* and *son montuno*. Synonymous with *largo*.

Cáscara
Lit. 'shell'. Refers both to the sides (or shell) of the timbales and to the rhythm played there in contemporary salsa. The term is also used for the *palito* (stick) rhythm, played on the *catá* in *rumba guaguancó*.

Catá
A small wooden log played with sticks and used in *rumba, santería* and *tumba francesa*.

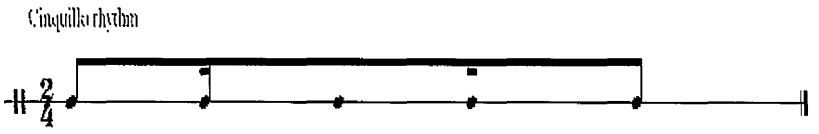
Cerveceria
Beer factory. Many had large gardens in which promotional concerts were held.

Chachachá
A genre of ballroom dance music which developed out of the *danzón* and was played by *charanga* orchestras. Originally based on a rhythm developed by the bandleader Enruque Jorrín, it was first popularised in the 1950s.

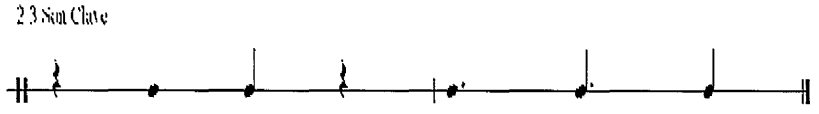
Changüí
One of the oldest styles of *son montuno*, originating in the Guantánamo area of Eastern Cuba and still performed by local groups such as Grupo Changüí de Guantánamo. Typical instrumentation comprises *tres, bongó, güiro,* maracas and *marímbula*. Related genres include *kiribá* and *nengón*.

Charanga Orchestra
A type of ensemble, also known as *charanga francesa*, used for perfoming instrumental *danzones* from the beginning of the 20th century. A typical ensemble comprises flute, strings, piano, bass and percussion.

Cinquillo
A five-note, syncopated rhythmic cell found in the *contradanza* and *danzón* and originally brought to Cuba with Haitians fleeing the Revolution at the end of the 18th century.



Clave
A five-note, two-bar rhythmic cell, derived from West African timeline patterns and used as a repeated ostinato in Cuban popular music styles such as *rumba* and *son montuno*. There are various clave patterns – *son clave, rumba clave, 6/8 clave* – and all function on the basis of the alternation of syncopated and regular rhythmic patterns (see also *tango congo* and *banqueato*). In current salsa terminology, the alternating bars are known as sides- the three side (with three notes) and the two side (with two) - and the pattern can be played in either direction i.e starting with either bar. This alternation has become part of the rhythmic foundation of salsa and Cuban-derived dance music throughout the Americas.



Claves
A pair of wooden sticks, struck together to produce a penetrating sound, and used to play the *clave* rhythm. In *rumba*, one stick has a hollowed out section to increase resonance; *son claves* are identical and often smaller.

Cocoyé
A dance from the Oriente of Cuba, with origins in Haiti.

Comparsa/Conga de Comparsa
A carnival ensemble consisting of brass, percussion and singers. Also used to describe the street procession and the musical style played.

Conga
i) A carnival rhythm played in carnival processions.
ii) A cabaret style, played by Cuban jazz bands, which included few elements from the street style
iii) A large drum of African origin (see also *tumbadora*).

Conjunto
A type of musical ensemble performing *son montuno* which emerged in the late 1930s with the expansion of the *septeto* to comprise *tres, maracas, guitar, bongo, claves*, bass, two or more trumpets, conga, piano and vocals.

Contradanza
A Cuban dance, in both 6/8 and 2/4, popular in the 19th century and derived from the French *contredanse* and English country dance.

Controversia
An improvised musical contest between two singers, found mainly in Cuban *guajira* music.

Corneta China
A double reed wind instrument with a penetrating sound, used in carnival processions.

Coro
Lit. chorus. Used to describe the singers who alternate with a fixed response to the improvising lead singer, within the call and response section of *son montuno.*

Coro de Clave/ Coro de Guagauncó
Types of Afro-Cuban choral ensemble, popular in the late 19th/early 20th centuries and considered possible precursors to *son montuno.*

Cuatro
Small Puerto Rican stringed instrument, similar to the *tres* but tuned with five double strings.

Danzón
An instrumental dance genre performed in the 19th century by the *orquesta típica* and in the 20th by the *charanga francesa.* Emerging from the 19th century *contradanza* and the later *danza*, the *danzón* has a rondo structure: the *paseo* (introduction) alternates with more tranquil interludes in which different instruments are featured. The *danzonete* (popular in the 1930s) incorporates a vocal line into this structure.

Décima
Spanish ten-line poetic form, often used in the construction of verse sections in both *guajira* and *rumba.*

Diablo
The final tutti section of the *montuno* section in the *son montuno* of Arsenio Rodriguez. Arsenio was the first bandleader to pre-compose a complex brass counterpoint, providing a dramatic finale to the piece.

Estribillo
Refrain or chorus in *son montuno.*

Gambare
Four or five stringed plucked lute played by Soninke *griots.*

Griot
West African hereditary professional musician and oral historian.

Guaguancó
See *rumba.*

Guajira, música
A rural song genre performed by Cuban peasant farmers with lyrics celebrating the Cuban countryside within a simple musical structure and accompanied by a variety of Cuban guitars and percussion.

Guaracha
A Cuban song style originating in 19th century comic *bufo* theatre with a verse/chorus structure and satirical lyrics.

Güiro
A serrated gourd, scraped with a stick and part of the percussion section of many types of Cuban musical ensemble, most notable *son montuno* and *danzón.*

Habanera
A characteristic 19th century rhythmic pattern, also known as the *ritmo de tango* and found throughout the Caribbean. The term is also used for a specific style of *danza.*

Hoddu
Fulbe three to five stringed lute, similar to the Mande *koni.*

Koni
Mande four or five stringed lute.

Largo
The verse section in *rumba* and *son montuno* (synonymous with *canto*).

Laúd
Spanish plucked string instrument of Arabic origin with five double strings and one single.

Mambo
i) A musical genre played by Cuban jazz bands in the 1950s and popularised worldwide by Damasio Pérez Prado.
ii) The harmonically static *montuno* section of a *danzón* from the late 1930s.
iii) The final, tutti section, which follows the instrumental solo in *son montuno* from the 1940s onwards (see *diablo)*

Maraca
Shaker or rattle, made from gourds filled with seeds, dating from pre-Colombian times and played in pairs in *son montuno.*

Marímbula
A large box lamellephone, derived from the African *mbira.* It was used as a bass instrument in early rural *son montuno* and is still present in contemporary *changüí* ensembles.

Martillo
The repeated, regular rhythmic pattern plated by the *bongó* player.

Mbira Dzavadzimu
Large Zimbabwean lamellophone with 22 or more keys.

Merengue
A fast 2/4 dance genre from the Dominican Republic.

Montuno
Lit. 'from the mountains'.
i) The *montuno* section of a song is the open-ended second part which features call and response singing and instrumental solos over a repeated rhythmic and harmonic ostinato (see *tumbao*).
ii) The piano *montuno* is the ostinato played by the pianist as part of the shared *tumbao* which underpins the *montuno* section.

Nuevo Ritmo
Lit. 'new rhythm'. Refers to the new open-ended section added to *danzones* by Orestes and Israel Lopez in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Later also known as the *mambo*.

Orquesta Típica
An open air orchestra comprising wind instruments, violins and percussion and used for the performance of *contradanzas* and later *danzones* during the 19th century, until superseded by the *charanga francesa*.

Palito
Lit. 'little stick'. Refers to the rhythmic pattern sounded by the sticks on the *catá* in *rumba*.

Paseo
The introduction section of *danzón*, giving time for dancers to choose partners.

Piano Montuno
See *montuno*.

Ponche
The fourth crotchet of a 4/4 bar (most commonly on the 'three' side of the *clave*) when stressed by the entire ensemble.

Pregón
A song style based on the cries of street vendors.

Punto Guajiro
Improvised sung Cuban genre of Spanish origin, performed with guitars and percussion.

Rayado (or rasgueado)
Guitar strumming technique used in *trova* in which the fingers are completely fanned out.

Rumba
Afro-Cuban secular dance genre, performed by voices and percussion. There are three styles – *yambú, guaguancó* and *columbia* – with *guanguancó* being the best known and all involve improvisatory instrumental performance, song and dance.

Salsa
Lit. 'sauce'. Modern dance music of Cuban origin encompassing a variety of styles, which emerged in the second half of the 20th century in Latin communities in the United States, and spread throughout the Americas to incorporate many regional genres.

Sanza
Small Central African lamellophone.

Septeto
Ensemble which emerged in the late 1920s with the addition of the trumpet to the *sexteto* (see below).

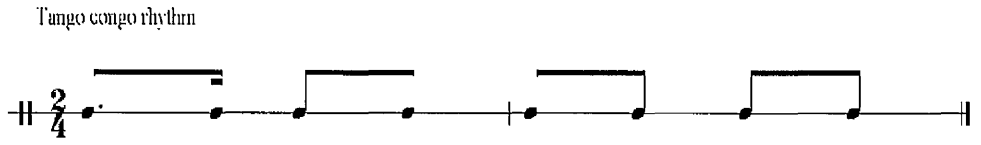
Sexteto
The type of ensemble used in the performance of *son montuno* in 1920s Havana. A typical sextet would comprise *tres,* guitar, bass, *bongó, maracas, claves* and vocals.

Son montuno
A Cuban sung dance genre which was first popularised in Eastern Cuba in the late 19th century and spread to the rest of the island in the early 20th. With the huge success of Septeto Nacional at the Seville Expo in 1929, the genre gained official acceptance and supplanted *danzón* as the 'national' dance. *Sones* have two sections: the *largo*, and the open-ended *montuno* which comprises vocal call and response and instrumental improvisation over a regular rhythmic and harmonic ostinato. The appending of the word *son* to other genres – such as *son pregón* or *bolero son* – implies the addition of a *montuno* section.

Sonero
Vocalist who performs *son montuno.*

Santería
Afro-Cuban religion which fuses the Yoruba tradition with elements from Roman Catholicism.

Tango Congo
Rhythmic pattern especially associated with the *afro* genre (see below). It is made up of the habanera rhythm, alternated with four regular beats.



Tidinit
Four or five stringed Mauritanian lute.

Timba
Contemporary Cuban music which emerged in the 1990s. Similar in structure to international salsa but with a wider range of influences, from Cuban folkloric music to funk, rap and hip hop.

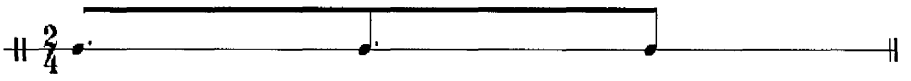
Timbales
A pair of snare-type drums, mounted on a stand. Originaly associated with the *charanga* orchestra, they are now regular feature of global salsa groups.

Timeline
Asymmetric rhythmic patterns found in large parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The timeline is usually played on a musical instrument of penetrating sound quality, and serves to orientate the other musicians within the rhythmic cycle.

Tres
Cuban plucked string instrument, similar in appearance to the guitar, but tuned with three double strings (the outer two tuned in octaves and the central one in unison) and played with a plectrum. The original tuning was a second inversion D minor triad but a C major triad has recently become as popular. Closely associated with the performance of *son montuno.*

Tresillo
Rhythmic cell found throughout the Caribbean and regularly used as an accompanying pattern in 19th century instrumental music. It also comprises the 'three' side of the *son clave.*

Tresillo rhythm



Trova
Self-accompanied traditional song, found particularly in the Oriente and performed by street musicians playing guitars.

Tumbadora
The mid size conga drum, but the term is used for conga drums in general.

Tumba Francesa
Can refer to both Haitian social groups established in Cuba at the end of the 18th century by immigrants fleeing the Haitian Revolution, and to the musical styles performed by these groups.

Tumbao
The rhythm section of a *son* ensemble and the composite rhythm played by its members. Also used to refer to the individual patterns played by bass, conga and piano.

Vilhuela
Iberian string instrument, similar to lute, popular in colonial Cuba.

Xalam
Wolof five stringed plucked lute.

Zarzuela
Spanish and Cuban light opera. The majority of Cuban zarzuelas were written in the first half of the 20th century but were usually set during the colonial period.

Interviews

Conducted by the Author

Leonardo Acosta (writer) Havana, 11/7/02, 16/8/02

Andrés Alén (writer) Havana, 12,7,02

Rolando Baró (former pianist with Conjunto Casino) Havana, 21/4/04

Roberto Carcasses (jazz pianist) Havana, 6/8/02

Jorge Luis Cordero Cordero (*son montuno* guitarist) Havana, 3/8/02

John Crawford (jazz and salsa pianist) London 17/6/05

René Espí (son of Conjunto Casino singer Roberto Espí) Havana, 27.4.04

Lilia Expósito Pino (pianist with Bellita y Jazztumbatá) Havana, 26/7/02, 14/8/02

Angel Laborí (pianist with Las Estrellas de Chappottín) Havana, 9/8/02,13/8/02,24/4/02

Pedro Martínez, Teorani Lamegon Hierragado (pianist and *tresero*, Conjunto Avila) Havana 27/4/04

Rebeca Mauleón (author and pianist) San Fransisco 18/4/03

Pablo Menéndez (musician) Havana 13/8/02

Roberto Parajón (pianist) Havana, 3/8/02

Pupi Pedroso (former pianist with Los Van Van) Havana, 24/7/02

Roland Perrin (jazz and salsa pianist) London 23/9/04

José Reyes (researcher at the Museo de la Música, Havana) Havana, 23/4/04, 28/4/04

Accessed at the Díaz Ayala Collection, Florida International University

Antonio Arcaño, interviewed by J Ramos (cassette 1572) no date

Humberto Cané, interviewed by Marco Salazar (cassette 2612) 15/9/1993

Felix Chappottín, interviewer not stated (cassette 967) no date

Roberto Espí, interviewed by Cesar Pagano (no cassette number) 23/6/1989

Arsenio Rodríguez, interviewer not stated (cassette 2617) no date

Anselmo Sacasas, interviewed by Gilbert Mamesy (cassette 191) 1988

Tribute to Alberto Socarrass, Max Salazar radio programme (cassette 1348) no date

Tribute to Sonora Matancera, Radio Cubanacán (no cassette number) 19/5/1984

Nelo Sosa, interviewed by Augustín Ribot (cassette 1085) no date

Miguelito Valdés, interviewed by Gilbert Mamesy (no cassette number) 1988

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78rpm Recordings accessed at the Díaz Ayala Collection, Florida International University

Conjunto Colonial

Ahí viene el Verdulero Panart 1100-1 (1947)
Amor de media noche Victor 23-1208-1 (1949)
Báilame el mambo Victor 23-5537-2 (1951)
Caminando, caminando Panart 1099-1 (1947)
Como baila mi negra Panart 1100-2 (1947)
El Paso del mulo Victor 23-5161-2 (1950)
En Ayunas con un Pollito Victor 23-1337-2 (1949)
En Cutara Victor 23-5426-2 (1951)
Estoy como Nunca Victor 23-5584-2 (1951)
La Bodega del Ñato Panart 1075-1 (1947)
Mariana Victor 23-5557-1 (1951)
No mientas corazón Victor 23-1208-2 (1949)
Pendenciera Victor 23-1368-1 (1949)
Que Dios te perdone Victor 23-1368-2 (1949)
Que Mambo Victor 23-5161-1 (1950)
Quédate conmigo Victor 23-5426-1 (1951)
Todo lo tengo ya Victor 23-5584-1 (1951)
Vengo Cepillando Panart 1099-2 (1947)
Vive corazón Panart 1075-2 (1947)
Ya no puedo Creerlo Victor 23-5537-1 (1951)
Yo no puedo vivir sin ti Victor 23-1490-1 (1950)

Conjunto Cubakonga

Como Ayer Columbia 6667-2

Conjunto Gloria Matancera

Año 44 Victor 23-0183-2 (1944)
Ay Cariño Panart F 30-0023-1 (1948)
Bello Amanacer Panart F 30-0023-2 (1948)
Cachumba Victor 23-0582-2 (1948)
Como Pica Victor 23-0582-1 (1948)
El Baile del Sillón Panart 1226-1 (1948)
El Cepillador Verne 0388-1 (1950)
El Directivo Panart F 3030-2 (1948)
El Limoncito Ansonia 5106-2 (1950)
Es Tu Amor Impossible Victor 23-0183-1 (1944)

Eso Crees tu Panart F 3009-2 (1950)
La Comadre Dorotea Verne 0387-1 (1950)
La Campana Verne 0387-2 (1950)
Que Grande eres Panart 12020-2 (1950)
Rapindey Victor 23-0626-2 (1946)
Se Aleja el lechón Victor 23-0626-1
Sueltame Verne 0388-2

Jovenes del Cayo
Alabanza a Changó Seeco 7142-1 (1951)
Así es la humanidad Seeco 7108-2 (1951)
Bachata Oriental Coda 5085-1 (1947)
Bula waya Seeco 7122-2 (1951)
Deja la cosa como está Seeco 7124-2 (1951)
Doña Olga Coda 5063-1 (1947)
El Dedo Gordo Coda 5063-2 (1947)
El Peinado de Maria Seeco 7098-1 (1951)
Esa sí es cheque Coda 5085-2 (1947)
Le dijó el gato al ratón Seeco 7084-1 (1951)
Nada lo que sea Coda 5091-1 (1948)
Pedro Seeco 7098-2 (1951)
Piedra cu tu maren Seeco 7142-2 (1951)
Rio la Yagua Coda 5091-1
Ritmo Alegre Seeco 7140-1 (1951)
Tu esta emarañao Seeco 7140-2 (1951)

Conjunto Kubavana
Albanciosa Victor 23-0890-2 (1947)
El Alacrán Victor 23-0507-2 91946)
Empego Naroco Victor 23-0850-2 (1947)
Los Muchachos de Belén Verne 474-2
Oyeme Cantar Verne 475-2 (1949)
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Quítate el Zapato Victor 23-0382-2 (1945)
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Rubén González: Introducing Rubén González. World Circuit WCD049, 1996
Septeto Nacional de Ignacio Piñeiro. Seeco CD9278, 1996
Sexteto y Conjunto Glora Matancera: Vengo Arrollando Tumbao TCD066, 1995
Sexteto habanero: Los Raices del Son. Tumbao TCD009, 1992
Son Cubano. Goldies GLD25359-1-2-3, 1999
Sonora Matancera: 40 Años de la Sonora Matancera. Peerless 4157, 2001
Sonora Matancera: Años Dorados Cubanos. Ansonia CD1225 nd
Sonora Matancera: En Tu Busca. Ansonia CD1535, 1994
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The Cuban Danzón: Before There was Jazz 1906-1929. Arhoolie 7032, 1999
The Music of Cuba 1909-1951. Columbia CK62234, 2000
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Xavier Cugat and his Orchestra:Rumba Rumbero. Tumbao TCD023, 1992

List of tracks on the CD compilations provided

CD1

1 *Mi Son Tiene Candela*: Grupo Changüí de Guantánamo (1998)
2 *Mi Son Tiene Candela*: Grupo Changüí de Guantánamo (2001)
3 *Mujer Bandolera*: Sexteto Habanero Godínez
4 *Rosa que Linda Eres*: Sexteto Habanero Godínez
5 *Aquella Boca*: Sexteto Habanero
6 *Mujeres Enamórenme*: Sexteto Nacional
7 *Martillo Claro*: Sexteto Bologna
8 *Somos Ocho Orientales*: Grupo Típico Oriental
9 *Abom Aré*: Sexteto Gloria Cubana
10 *Los Marineros*: Sexteto Gloria Cubana
11 *Mi Amor*: Sexteto Gloria Cubana
12 *Jóvenes de la Defensa*: Antonio Arcaño y sus Maravillas
13 *Corta la Caña*: Antonio Arcaño y sus Maravillas
14 *Permanganato*: Antonio Arcaño y sus Maravillas
15 *Tu Vera lo que Tu Va Ve*: Los Hermanos Palau
16 *Nuestro Son*: Orquesta Casino de la Playa
17 *La Ola Marina*: Los Hermanos Palau
18 *La Ola Marina*: Sonora Matancera
19 *Se Va El Caramelero*: Orquesta Casino de la Playa
20 *Dolor Cobarde*: Orquesta Casino de la Playa

CD2

1 *Quiquiribu Mandinga*: Conjunto Casino
2 *Apretando*: Conjunto Casino
3 *El Cuento del Sapo*: Sonora Matancera
4 *Sandunguera*: Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez
5 *Naña Rube*: Conjunto Casino
6 *Rumba Quimbumba:* Conjunto Casino
7 *El Cheque*: Sonora Matancera
8 *Machuquillo*: Sonora Matancera
9 *Vacilón*: Sonora Matancera
10 *Cosas de la Calle*: Conjunto Kubavana
11 *Echa pa'allá Chico*: Sonora Matancera
12 *A Buscar Camaron*: Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez
13 *Camina a Trabajá*: Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez
14 *Quien Será Mi Amor*: Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez
15 *Año 44*: Conjunto Gloria Matancera
16 *Con la Lengua Fuera*: Conjunto Casino
17 *A Mi Que*: Conjunto Casino
18 *El Pirulero no Vuelve Mas*: Conjunto Arsenio Rodríguez
19 *En Ayunas con un Pollito*: Conjunto Colonial
20 *Se Rompió el Muñeco*: Sonora Matancera
21 *Ya Se Peinó Maria*: Sonora Matancera
22 *Corta el Bonche*: Conjunto Kubavana
23 *El Peinado de Maria*: Jovenes del Cayo
24 *El Cepilador:* Gloria Matancera

CD3

1 *La Comadre Dorotea*: Gloria Matancera
2 *Echa Pa' Alla Chico*: Conjunto Casino
3 *Deja la Cosa Como Esta*: Jovenes del Cayo
4 *Donde Estan los Rumberos*: Sonora Matancera
5 *El Limoncito*: Gloria Matancera
6 *El Directivo*: Gloria Matancera

7 *Que se Vaya*: Conjunto Kubavana
8 *Dulce Amante*: Sonora Matancera
9 *Ay Nicolas*: Conjunto Casino
10 *En Cutara*: Conjunto Colonial
11*Mi Chiquita Quiera Guarachar*: Conjunto Casino
12*Que Cintura*: Sonora Matancera
13 *Tumba y Quinto*: Sonora Matancera
14 *Tocoloro*: Arsenio Rodríguez
15 *El Cerro Tiene la Llave*: Arsenio Rodríguez
16 *Tumba Palo Cucuye*: Arsenio Rodríguez
17*Mi China Si:* Conjunto Los Astros
18 *Juaniquita*: Conjunto Los Astros
19*Cosquillitas*: Conjunto Los Astros
20*Deja me Tranquillo*: Conjunto Los Astros
21*Jovenes del Muelle*: Conjunto Los Astros
22 *Yumbale*: Conjunto Los Astros